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# Invoking The Darkness: Thematic Unification Via Druidic Context In William Butler Yeats' The Secret Rose

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***Invoking the Darkness:***

***Thematic Unification via Druidic Context  
in William Butler Yeats'  
The Secret Rose***

**by Amy Marciano**

**Respectfully submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of English.**

***Seton Hall University  
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And lastly, to the greatest influence of my life, my mother whose love and concern exceed all others: you are ever my source of strength, comfort, and pride. I cherish you more than mere words express, so please accept in their stead the sum of my thoughts, passions, and ambitions—this book is yours.

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No shining candelabra have prevented us from looking  
into the darkness, and when one looks into the darkness  
there is always something there.

*W. B. Yeats*

# I.

## *Introduction to Druidry: Reconciling the Romantic*

Of Yeats' myriad literary endeavors, his Celtic short story collection The Secret Rose evades due critical acclaim. Meanwhile, the critical attention given, limited and misdirected at best, centers upon thematic incongruities and obscure mythological references that resist reconciliation both within the work's context and the Romantic literary tradition as a whole. In truth, and sorely overlooked by critics with a rigid academic approach, The Secret Rose actually contains its own thematic unification, explicit when read according to the precise theosophical system inherent within the stories' Celtic premise. Druidry, Ireland's ancient esoteric religion, establishes the mythical foundation upon which Yeats deliberately bases his collective tales. Hence explicating The Secret Rose in light of its Druidic premise provides a far richer, more exacting understanding of the work, while mutually resolving the theme's poetic conflict and complementing Yeats' Romantic vision.

Although the characters, plot, and time frame of The Secret Rose vary from tale to tale, the central cultural rift between a spiritually enlightened ancient Ireland and the contemporary orthodox society that supplants it provides textual cohesion, manifesting itself in a multilayered thematic conflict. As socialized religion supersedes and outmodes Celtic esotericism, it concurrently obscures the Divine Essence which inspires, feeds, and nurtures man's poetic genius. Hence as Christianity replaces Druidism, the poet's clear artistic vision blurs in a pragmatic environment that neither acknowledges nor supports it. Overlapping cycles of progressional irreconcilability are the inevitable consequence of this division between the contemporary poet's spiritual longings, and the materialistic society that progressively fears, blasphemes, and finally discredits divine creative inspiration of a pagan source, rendering the poet fixed, passive, ignorant of his own dilemma, and



fortifying his own artistic impotence. The social tension between counter cultures of diverse ages and their spiritual ramifications emulate the literary contention between Victorian and Romantic ideologies. Romanticism's idealistic vision of a natural artistic spirituality contrary to Victorian orthodoxy neatly parallels Druidism's acute opposition to the often hypocritical and spiritually immobilizing religious constructs that succeed it. The Secret Rose illustrates this supercession of Celtic Ireland and all it embodies: Druidry, nationalism, spiritual and artistic unity through nature, the power of the Bard, and Yeats' poetic vision, with an orthodox, utilitarian, and materially obsessive society, fortifying Yeats' Romantic literary ambition by defining the sole spiritual ideal, Druidry itself, that reconciles his poetic contention.

The Druidic philosophy of ancient Ireland acts as an organic unifier of man's natural, spiritual and social environment so as to provide a unique harmony between all that man perceives and all that he creates. It particularly stresses the delicate interrelationship between man and nature, as microcosms of a universal, artistic design. This concept in turn acts as a relevant precursor to the Romantic definition of artistic vision. Generally, the hallmark of the eminent Romantic poets is the conviction that man may embrace his spiritual and artistic potential by exploring the poetic imagination in communion with the epicureal aspects of one's natural environment. Poets honored this sacred realm of artistic transcendence as a spiritual pulse that beat within both man and nature as two facets of a unifying force. Within their harmonious union and the poet's recognition of himself as part of a greater organic whole can he experience God firsthand, and shape that experience into art itself. Conversely it is man's ignorance of this union and his irreverence towards its facets that demean him, resulting in the fall of poet at the expense of his artistic vision and the offense of God. Orthodoxy is the catalyst of this collapsed continuity, redirecting man's spiritual reverence of nature with religious constructs of sin and salvation, demons and saints, punishment and reward. Socialized toward a moral obsession, man looks to these fabricated orthodox constructs to define,

measure and evaluate his moral conduct, thereby fragmenting himself from spiritual unity, thwarting his artistic quest, blaspheming the unifying force that animates his poetic passion, and blinding himself to the cause of his own spiritual famine. Druidic philosophy in practice provides a complete reconciliation between the Romantic poet and the elusive artistic ideal he endeavors to achieve, despite the orthodoxy contemporary society forces upon him. Druidry takes the Romantic premise one critical step further by integrating man's material society with its own spiritual construct. Hence the philosophy itself neatly reconciles the universal spirit, the natural artistic, and the material products of man's cultural environment, including national, historical, social, governmental, intellectual, industrial, and religious interests. Suitably then, one can apply the concept of Druidry to those literary works that address the poetic conflict contemporary society fosters, ideally when a story grounds its plot in Celtic society, such as The Secret Rose itself.

Druid philosophy thereby becomes a necessary adjunct to the study of The Secret Rose, considering its deliberate Celtic focus, for the theosophy and the fiction epitomize the ancestral spiritual roots of ancient Ireland. As of yet, critics have never explored this angle of Yeats' short fiction collection, despite its obvious contextual relevance, largely because Druidry as a magical tradition is dismissed by academic circles as trivial, anti-intellectual folly. In truth, Druidic study, impeded by academic prejudice, remains beyond the comprehension of the scholar who tries to negate its literary value via traditional academic terms. According to Yeats expert and occult scholar Kathleen Raine,

...The merely academic study of magical symbolism may be likened to the analysis of musical scores by a student who does not know that the documents he meticulously annotates are merely indications of the evocation of music from instruments of whose very existence he is ignorant. Magic, in other words, is an art. (Raine, 1)

Raine argues that the study of occult symbolism that magical traditions routinely employ is largely dismissed due to lack of understanding. Magic and the mystical traditions predicated upon it such as Druidry itself are grounded in artistic as well as spiritual contexts. Indeed, Druidry's classification as a pagan study should not belie its critical value, particularly as a literary approach, when it is indelibly linked to the Romantic tradition it fortifies. Paganism in the sense of a nature religion does not distinguish between sacred and secular agendas, nor does it disjoint the materialist products of a fecund poetic imagination from the divine force that inspires their creation. Within the context of Druidry, material does not encroach upon a spiritual domain nor debase it, but rather demonstrates the tangibility of poetic vision. Hence Druid paganism reconciles the poetic ideal Yeats attempts to recapture. Furthermore, Yeats' integration of occult references such The Secret Rose's Celtic mythology provided the author with the perfect Romantic platform upon which to decry the Victorian pragmatic and orthodox interests that threatened his muse: a common literary approach defined by occult researcher Margot Adler:

Those who wrote before the second half of the nineteenth century, writers such as Balzac, Schiller, and Goethe, all reflected a hope in some personal or collective renovatio—a mystical restoration of man's original dignities and powers. The second and later path, taken by [writers of the latter nineteenth century], was the use of occult themes as a powerful weapon in their rebellion against the bourgeois establishment and its ideology. Implicit in this rebellion was a rejection of Judeo-Christian values and the social and aesthetic sensibilities of the day. (Adler, 365)

Accordingly, Yeats' literary use of the occult, Druidry in particular, satisfies both his personal and political agendas within the thematic framework of The Secret Rose. With regards to spiritual sanctity, Druidry provides the poet's mystical unification with the divine spirit of art and beauty by accounting for all of man's material, religious, political,

and socialized creations. Also, by embodying the ancient Celtic heroic ideal, Druidry inspires a strong nationalist sense that sharply contrasts the rude, invasive, and often destructive interests of an orthodox society intent upon absorbing and dismantling those nobler pagan principles that threaten bourgeois totality. Druidry becomes the perfect thematic context upon which Yeats can denounce the anti-poetic social constructs that blaspheme his spiritual and national ideals. Hence, it is precisely this occultist critical perspective that merits considerable academic value when regarding the premise of Yeats' The Secret Rose, and certainly warrants its study.

## II.

### *Constructing the Rose: In Defense of Gnosis*

When explicating The Secret Rose, particularly from a Druidic standpoint, one must consider Yeats' cultural interests in regards to the work's deliberate organization. The Secret Rose's mythological and nationalist foci were preceded by Yeats' imaginative Celtic short fiction, Dhoya, which was published in 1891. The tale with its regionalized setting and specific mythological influence whetted National Observer publisher W.E. Henley's appetite for similar works of a distinct Celtic flavor. Yeats responded with eight original works of an Irish cultural slant, written between 1892 and 1894, which utilized ancient Celtic myth and cultural trivia that his Irish readership could readily identify. Future stories constructed along this model were featured in such popular literary publications as *The New Review*, *The Pageant*, *The Savoy*, *The Sketch*, *The Speaker*, and *The Weekly Sun*, which Yeats later collected, revised, and reorganized to demonstrate a specific cultural theme in The Secret Rose (Watson, ix).

The deliberate order of the collective tales themselves provides the project in its totality a "structural unity based on history, locale, theme, and symbolism," as "the stories move from pagan Ireland through the monastic era, into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concluding in Yeats' own modern era (Watson, xi). Thus the chronological order itself engages the development of Irish history, from that of a strong, spiritually keen nation to the disjointed, pragmatic Irish orthodoxy that supersedes its nobler Celtic ancestry, yielding devastating spiritual repercussions. In establishing this precise order, Yeats neatly recreates the dichotomous pattern of Ireland's antiquarian age in exacting opposition to its spiritually degenerated modern culture. The Secret Rose's regional preoccupation is central to Yeats' cultural protest--the local Sligo setting of the tales encompasses a nationalist spirit in a marriage of Irish topography, history, myth, religion,

and ancestry. Hence simple chronology gives rise to a great many subjects that touch upon the Irish nationalist spirit. The concentrated focus upon Yeats' native region and Ireland's national concerns organically unifies locale with the stories' thematic interests of an elusive Celtic spiritual ideal. The ideal itself is fortified by the constant Druidic allusions traced by myth, symbolism, and cultural history inherent in each respective tale. This precise thematic network of integrated literary concepts is not without its specific nationalist purpose of design: while the deliberate chronological order of The Secret Rose demonstrates the slow demise of Ireland's heroic antiquity by a progressively materialistic society, Yeats' use of a common mythological language familiar to his educated readership increases the work's provincial appeal of esotericism directly for those who would benefit most from the story's instruction--the people of Ireland's demoralized age. Yeats, in a particular correspondence, defines this specific approach as nothing less than his artistic duty:

I feel that the work of an Irish man of letters must be not so much to awaken or quicken or preserve the national idea among the mass of the people but to convert the educated classes to it...Ireland is terribly demoralized in all things--in her scholarship, in her criticism, in her politics, in her social life. (Watson, xii)

Yeats' specific poetic endeavors concerning The Secret Rose are not directed to the common citizens of Ireland--the modest classes for whom Celtic mythology served as a colloquial heritage--but for Irish gentry firmly rooted in the myopic social interests of Yeats' modern day. For Yeats', these social interests that included religious orthodoxy, Victorian pragmatism, industrial utilitarianism, and accounted for Ireland's overall degeneration. His nationalist ambition, woven into the Celtic mythology of The Secret Rose tales, allegorically defines the history, culture, and religion of an ancient Ireland that amasses the nation's former heroic identity. Therein it is most appropriate that Yeats should translate this common, religious mythology that encompasses Ireland's nobler

nationalist spirit with a literary collection that bespeaks of relevance to Ireland's most educated citizens, which comprise its bureaucracy. Only bureaucracy and all its resultant social and spiritual ills can reconcile its own material progressions with the greater nobility of its Celtic ancestry. Thus Yeats strives to achieve a unique blend of aristocracy and esotericism within the context of The Secret Rose, utilizing the pagan theosophy that grounds Ireland's nationalist spirit as the poetic ideal his country must embrace for the sake of its own moral preservation. In a classic case of inversion that expresses a conflict of interests, the moral, national, and artistic salvation of Ireland's misdirected bourgeoisie lies in its honoring 'anti-orthodox, anti-pragmatic, anti-bourgeois ideology. Druidism is that ideology: a necessary adjunct to the ancient Celtic culture, it delineates the mythological deities, festivals, and philosophies the culture embraced. Therein Druidic references of a heroic strain provide the ideal panacea for a sickening, stifled, and smothered nationalist spirit by touching upon Ireland's spiritual roots. George William Russell, Yeats' artistic and occultist contemporary otherwise known as "A.E.," suggested Yeats undertake a nationalist literary project based upon Ireland's pagan mythology:

In 1896, A E had proposed to Yeats a collaborative book of essays on 'the renewal in Ireland of the heroic figures of our own dawn' ...[considering] that modern Ireland thus needed 'the creation of heroic figures, types, whether legendary or taken from history, and enlarged to epic proportions by our writers, who would use them in common, as Cuculain, Fionn, Ossian, and Oscar, were used by the generations of poets who have left us the bardic history of Ireland...that such types are of the highest importance and have the most ennobling influence on a country, cannot be denied.'

(Marcus, 47)

With their Celtic mytho-historical premise, Yeats' previously published independent tales perfectly suited this vision, championing Ireland's heroic antiquity along the epic lines of Celtic legend, and honoring the ancient poetic ideal of the bard—an ideal

sadly displaced in modern society, debasing the Celtic spirituality which embodies Ireland, morality, beauty, and art in sum.

Appropriately enough, it is George Russell himself to whom Yeats dedicated The Secret Rose, in a prefatory note that defines Yeats' poetic mission in light of his nationalist motivations. Ireland's spiritual collapse, inherently tied to a devalued Celtic heritage, necessarily crumbles the artistic epiphany it feeds. Yeats' attempt to reconcile a nationalist sensibility is only one facet of his greater, and more desperate effort to reestablish a poetic idea blasphemed in the modern society that ensconces him. Hence the collective tales, written "at different times and in different manners, and without any definite plan, they have but one subject, the war of the spiritual with natural order" (Yeats, 79). Yeats' overall plan behind The Secret Rose lies not in the original motivation for which the stories were individually written, but in their deliberate and precisely ordered unification which develops the theme of a progressive spiritual contention. Indeed, scores of critics have surmised as much in lieu of Yeats' spiritual concerns, since Yeats' overt admission upon the issue in The Secret Rose's preface leaves little room for misinterpretation. However, considerable critical discrepancies bloom where precise Celtic philosophical definitions of spirit and nature within The Secret Rose remain unaddressed, affecting the generally shallow or misconstrued readings of which innumerable critics are guilty. To date, absolutely no one has explored the inherent Druidic theosophical context of The Secret Rose, which specifically defines the aforementioned terms, reconciles the poetic conflict, and greatly enriches the theme, until now.

Orthodox definitions applied to The Secret Rose's contention between spirit and nature directly mark the principle source of critical discord. Although Yeats' focal theme of poetic conflict explicitly manifests in the social and religious constructs of a progressive Ireland, the source of that contention becomes problematic from a traditional critical stance. Spirit and nature as juxtaposed entities of an orthodox constitution throw critics



askance in their attempts to explain the essence of the conflict, and the symbolic system that defines it. One cannot read the tales with any degree of accuracy without first identifying specific definitions of both spirit and nature that the text thematically supports. Accurate definitions positively determine whether The Secret Rose indeed illustrates a reconciling tradition for Ireland's spiritual, artistic, and cultural despair, or rather subscribes to a fatalistic view of an irreparably collapsed ideal. The latter opinion, expressed by the majority of critics regardless of their orthodox or Gnostic approach, creates more disruptions in the thematic continuity of the collective tales than it elucidates. When spiritual order as the source of man's artistic inspiration is set in conflict against nature, which assists the Romantic artist's achievement of spiritual transcendence, the poetic premise of the Romantic literary epoch of which Yeats was a pronounced figure automatically collapses. Should universal order challenge its natural counterpart according to Romantic tradition, should natural law defy universal domain, then neither harmony or simple coexistence can man foster between the two orders within which he exists. Man is of course a material creation of nature containing a morally superior sensibility. If these two facets within him cannot harmoniously function, then he is subject to a constant, unabating internal conflict mirroring the abrasive dynamic between those spiritual and material environments of which he is a microcosm. Man's spiritual self at war with his material self in congruence with a grater organic conflict between universe and nature yields devastating consequences to the poetic spirit that, according to Romantic definition, requires both systems in communion to manifest. This perspective of a spiritual-natural dissension rashly applied to The Secret Rose does appear, superficially, to undermine Romantic poetic ideals while fortifying the Victorian disdain for base nature in lieu of man's religious potential. Victorianism endorsed an orthodoxy and bourgeoisie that Yeats himself disdained, however; therefore traditional orthodox definitions of spirituality as a heavenly ideal rewarded to those who morally overrule their natural instincts neither would Yeats apply to The Secret Rose's thematic premise nor do the

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stories themselves support. Yeats' spiritual Rose is now gentle and embracing, then violent and threatening, shifting its presence from benevolent to malevolent between stories. Nature at once rough and uncivil is nevertheless consistent in contrast, serving as a sanctuary for the pure of heart. At closer reading, neither the Rose nor nature itself rewards nor rejects upon a traditional moral basis under any circumstances, but aligns with those who honor the Celtic premise of universal spirit. Thus either concept resists any application of tidy orthodox definitions. Likewise a traditional, orthodox critical view of The Secret Rose remains, as always, inappropriate.

Without traditional academic approaches to perch on, one must address The Secret Rose from a critical stance that accounts for the work's inherent conflict between spirit and nature under new terms, and the resulting deformation of that contention as the poet's crippled muse. Such a criticism, albeit anti-orthodox, thus loosely academic in a traditional sense of the word, does indeed exist. Gnosticism as an ubiquitous theosophy addresses the spiritual-natural dynamic without confounding the interrelationship of each component via moral constructs of reward and punishment. By definition, Gnosticism denotes one's clear understanding of spiritual and natural orders; with that understanding comes the Gnostic's inherent responsibility to act in accordance with those orders. A Gnostic's cognizance of universal law binds him to that law, and in turn sharpens his vision of the impediment which is his material being. He needs no saints, priests, nor parish men to translate the law, no confessional nor penance to eradicate his moral transgression, no promise of reward nor threat of peril to modify his behavior. Only his complete acceptance as bound duty to honor the divine law which feeds his gnosis merits his spiritual transcendence; disregard of the law in lieu of material obsessions only sever man's spiritual unity: an intolerable actualization for the impaired visionary. The spiritual-material dichotomy, perfectly intact minus the hindering orthodox moral subtext, makes the Gnostic critical perspective a congruent approach to Yeats' short fiction collection when appropriately applied.

Acclaimed scholar and supposed foremost Yeats authoritarian Harold Bloom is the first noted to herald this new Gnostic critical approach into the realm of traditional academia. Bloom asserts "Yeats was a supernaturalist (with much skepticism mixed in) and in some sense a religious poet, but the religion was a syncretic Gnosticism" (Bloom, 1). By aligning Yeats' keen occult interests which dominated his early years as a poet with a Gnostic influence, Bloom proposes a unique philosophical blend as the creative backbone of Yeats' work. Rightfully then, traditional readings of Yeats' anti-orthodox fiction yields skewed literary interpretations. While Bloom further reasons that "canonical misreading provokes anti-canonical misreadings as a corrective"-- a pattern he attempts to amend with his own Gnostic interpretation--Bloom inadvertently contributes to the growing body of anti-canonical misreadings he disdains (Bloom,1). His blunder stems from an inappropriate definition of Gnosticism in its most rigid sense. If a reader must be exacting in his definitions of both spiritual and natural law as Yeats' applies them in The Secret Rose, then he must be equally exacting when selecting the particular branch of Gnosticism that embodies those precise definitions, working in tandem with the thematic premise of The Secret Rose and the Romantic tradition as a whole, not contrarily to them. Bloom is guilty of such an indiscretion when he bases his Gnostic criticism upon a narrow summary of the esoteric theosophy's ascetic branch established by philosopher Hans Jonas:

Gnosticism is a double radical dualism, a dualism between man and nature, and also between nature and God...the essentials of Gnostic doctrine by Hans Jonas [states]...that the divine is alien to the work and has neither part nor concern in the physical universe...what Jonas says of the Gnostic alien God is true also of the Yeatsian imagination; it "does not stand in any positive relation to the sensible world, but rather the negation and cancellation" of nature. I think that these similarities of Yeats and the Gnosis account for Yeats' obsession with transmigration since only Yeats

and the Gnosis, as far as I know, make a casual connection between  
libertinism and reincarnation. (Bloom, 7-8)

Bloom's theory seems to have merit determining Yeats' philosophical influence concerning The Secret Rose, as it appears to account for man's contention with his material environment in lieu of a spiritual essence he can define but cannot achieve. Jonas, and Bloom by default, cite the source of this conflict as a dualistic hierarchy: spirituality contests nature as a disconnected principle of material inferiority; man despises nature and therein himself as a material facet of that inferior principle which hinders his spiritual transcendence. Necessary spiritual famine--the result of one who knows of a spiritual transcendence he cannot achieve--and its desperate pursuit requires a negation of the material constraints that bind a Gnostic. According to Jonas' and Bloom's aforementioned arguments, this negation logically manifests itself in one of two possible behaviors: denying the flesh via self-flagellation, fasting, abstinence, and any measures that fall under the category of asceticism, or a masochistic indulgence of man's natural and thereby anti-spiritual impulses: Yeats' and Gnosis' "libertine reincarnation" as Bloom phrases it. In this theological context, radical gratification of man's carnal desires does not celebrate his natural instinct but undermines them with a self-destructive influx that abuses, overloads, and ultimately destroys the material body, releasing man's spiritual aspect toward reunification. Bloom's theory, it would seem, accounts not only for Yeats' war of the spiritual and natural order but also for man's progressive material indulgences, thematically demonstrated in The Secret Rose, as a means of inducing an apocalyptic cancellation and reunification of spirit. Hence Bloom declares in his criticism that Yeats is "an unscrupulous distorter of Romantic tradition" (Bloom, 1). However, theoretical semblances in Bloom's case simply and quite superficially belie a blaring critical misappropriation, readily exposed when considering both Yeats' preoccupation with esoteric religion during his creation of The Secret Rose stories, and a far more precise definition of Gnosticism than Jonas affords and Bloom blindly follows.

The theosophical teaching of Order of The Golden Dawn, of which Yeats is thoroughly documented as a zealous member throughout the 1890's, is a clear influence upon The Secret Rose's spiritual theme. The Order itself, instructing the Adept towards a clear universal path, touted neither radical asceticism nor indulgence but moderation as an appropriate spiritual measure. According to the Golden Dawn's didactic flying rolls—a series of select mystical lectures exclusively distributed amongst pre-1900 Adepts including Yeats himself --the Order mandates

Be moderate in all things human. Extreme ascetic habits, are to you here, a source of another danger, they may lead only to a contemplation of your own Heroism, in being abstinent...But, who is a slave to his animal soul, will practice vice even in a Forest; while he who restrains himself among the crowds of the city, and passes through a busy life unpolluted, shows more resistance and suffers a severer discipline, and shall obtain a greater reward. (MacGregor, 55)

The Golden Dawn's prescription for spiritual union requires discipline: the moderation of human impulses demonstrated within society itself, thereby reconciling man's spiritual quest with his material surroundings by demanding he exercise social mobility via spiritual fortitude. In lieu of this decree, neither libertinism nor asceticism will do—a philosophy expressed by Yeats own protagonist, the Knight, in "Out of the Rose":

At first we thought to die more readily by fasting unto death in honour of some saint; but this [the visionary Knight of Palestine] bade us know was evil, for we did it for the sake of death, and thus took out of the hands of God the choice of the time and manner of our death, and by so doing made His power the less. (Yeats, 112)

Yeats' Knight must operate within the limits of moderation to honor his God, the Rose of Spirit, wherein fasting unto death is considered an immoderate and selfish behavior that displaces one's faith with destructive measures. Much to Bloom's dismay should he bother to consider it, The Secret Rose's respective protagonists merit their

unification with the ultimate deity only in a state of honest dedication, not from self-absorbed, extremist actions of which material libertinism is every bit a part as asceticism itself. Characters who, via noble intention where Gnosis progressively wanes, defend their spiritual honor despite society's encroaching materialism obtain their reward. Conversely, those ensconced by material obsessions and the orthodox religious preoccupations society progressively affords, Bloom's "Gnostic libertines," warrant no union with the Rose of Spirit but court their own annihilation through the Rose's apocalyptic power.

However, Yeats' religious code of temperance only collapses one leg of Bloom's argument, insofar as his Gnostic critical misapplication. The other consideration that crumbles Bloom's premise with a far swifter blow is his narrow definition and thus misinterpretation of Gnostic theosophy. In Bloom's focus upon Gnosticism's dualism between spirit and nature, he fails to address the dichotomous nature of its own philosophy concerning those two entities, which sharply divides into two opposing perspectives. One side of Gnosis does despise the corrupted flesh as a product of gross, flawed, anomalous nature much like Bloom cites, resulting in man's material self-hatred. This ideology accounts for such offshoots as deconstructive nihilism, fatalism, and masochistic indulgence of a spiritually disordered strain: the assumption of many critics, although not so anti-canonical and brazen as Bloom, when considering Yeats' spiritual conflict and apocalyptic allusions. This branch of Gnosis in applications runs askew of The Secret Rose's thematic current and literary genre previously demonstrated, resisting literary reconciliation and merely fortifying its own flagrant critical agenda, opposing the Romantic work to which it is wrongfully applied. The second branch of Gnosis exists in philosophical contradiction to the aforementioned theory, espousing organic harmony between universal spirit and its material embodiments: nature and man as two facets of the artistic divine. This principle works nicely with the body of Romantic literature, inverting the natural environment from a profanity to a grace—something inherently sacred

as a manifestation of organic spirit, and thereby instrumental in man's Gnostic quest for vision. Margot Adler defines this sect as a multifaceted, trans-cultural phenomenon that manifests within tradition:

...human beings have been able to achieve a sacramental vision of being, and this may be the human wellspring of human spiritual consciousness. From that rich source there flow countless religious and philosophical tradition--between Eskimo shamanism and medieval alchemy, between Celtic Druidism and Buddhist Tantra--are many; but an essentially magical worldview is common to them all...This diverse family of religious and philosophies [represents] the Old Gnosis--the old way of knowing, which delighted in finding the sacred in the profane...It is a visionary style of knowledge, not a theological one, its proper language is myth and ritual; its foundation is rapture, not faith and doctrine; and its experience of nature is one of living communion. (Adler, 27-28)

Old Gnosis then is a pre-Christian philosophical body apart from Bloom's quasi-orthodox, After Common Era, self-debasing version of Gnosticism. Definitions of spiritualistic conjunction shift to one in respect of the spirit-nature-man triad, as opposed to one of disgust for any component of this delicate interrelationship. There is a transfer of consequential self-damnation from an engagement with base nature to an entanglement of social construct that disrespects the spiritual triad, and ultimately obscures man's vision of his own spiritual consciousness. This is the common magical tenet that usurps orthodox religion as a social construct with natural worship via myth, dance, poetry, and art. Magic as a Gnostic expression embodies nature, poetry and vision indiscriminately, as the means to both access and honor the universal artistic spirit the visionary seeks and the materialist rejects. Magic "recognizes man's indissoluble link with nature, and rather than stifle his natural instincts, it seeks to develop and blend them into the mighty unity known as willpower (Gonzalez-Whippler, 10). The poet-visionary as the magical Adept is the



author of his own spiritual unification through nature, or his own spiritual demise via a subscription to the false, intrusive social constructs of orthodoxy and materialism. Such is the plight of the displaced Celtic vision, Druidism, which both the theme and plots of The Secret Rose unwaveringly illustrate.

With a clearer idea of an appropriate Gnostic approach to The Secret Rose, one that accommodates both nature and the Romantic tradition while reconciling the material aspects of a spiritual ideal in harmonious coexistence, readers can now readdress Yeats' war of the spiritual and natural order, clarifying those two terms in a manner supportive of the tales' collective theme. According to Old Gnosis, spiritual order includes the natural environment and man's artistic vision within its law. Natural order against which spirituality battles must be something independent of spiritual law, something self-contained as an anti-visionary principle that undermines man's spiritual potency, dulls his perception, marginalizes him from nature, and fatally obscures his artistic quest. Man's natural tendencies within modern society are indeed not driven towards his artistic-spiritual potential; he is a social animal by instinct, which his intelligence shapes into a culturally progressive being whose material products, unfortunately more often than not, leave truly integrative spiritualism abandoned in the distant mists of myth and fable. The war of spiritual and natural polarities rages within the breast of man who either defends the vision or blasphemes it staking his personal interest in the obscuring construct of society. Likewise man alone suffers the consequences of his temporal injustice to eternal spirit. Society progresses, orthodoxy preaches, Celtic vision darkens, art weakens, while man's spiritualism suffocates, upsetting the delicate order of universal law until the law reestablishes domain through apocalyptic force. Yeats, the bardic visionary in his own right, notes the only remedy for man's spiritual tragedy: an environment supporting Old Gnosis resurrected with the ancient religion that honors artistic vision. Critic George Mills Harper recounts Yeats' own belief that

'In very early days,' 'the arts were almost inseparable from religion, going side by side with it into all life.' Now they have grown apart, the arts too proud and aloof in their quest for the perfect, religion too pedestrian and practical in its quest for power and sheer excitement. 'But here in Ireland, when the arts have grown humble, the [artists] will find two passions ready to their hands, love of Unseen Life and love of country.' 'In other words,' [Yeats] continued, 'I would have Ireland recreate the ancient arts' 'with subjects taken from his [the artist's] religious beliefs.' Only in this way and perhaps only in Ireland is it possible to achieve once more the union of art and religion. (Harper, 117)

The ancient religion that predominated Ireland's early days, one accounting for artistic vision, creative material expression, sacred nature, Unseen Life, and genuine nationalism, is Gnostic Druidism itself. Druidry is the Celtic vision, the substance of Yeats' art poetically conveyed through myth and mystical correspondences, readily perceived by the discerning, visionary mind. If Yeats indeed follows his own advice to create a Celtic spiritual vision via the mytho-poetic subjects of his own personal beliefs, then the obvious Druidic subtext of The Secret Rose is one wrought of deliberate calculation.

### **III.**

## ***In Philosophy and Practice: Yeats' Druidry***

Yeats' deliberate employment of Druidism inherent in The Secret Rose is apparent when exploring the theosophy's Romantic context, mythological focus, corresponding symbolic system, and bardic tradition. The general documentation of Druidry as an ancient, oral, obscured tradition is often unreliable, replete with fabrications and fancy as scholars unfamiliar with the tradition "fill in the gaps" of what they cannot accurately trace. Misinformation and tall tales abound, Druidry's true origins must be accurately determined to properly define Celtic spiritual reconciliation of their material surroundings. Included in the ubiquitous body of pagan nature religions, Druidic philosophy was born from early man's spiritual animation of the natural phenomena that manifested daily, seasonally, and annually, for which he could not otherwise account. Adler reiterates pagan authority Tim Zell's concise explanation of this cultural development:

Included in natural religious would be animism, totemism, pantheism...and the old religions of the Celts, the Gauls, and the fairy faith in Ireland. Zell wrote: The old pagan religions were never "created"...What little we can trace indicates a decent from Paleolithic and Neolithic fertility cults, hence the common symbols of the Earth Mother Goddess and the Horned God, representing, respectively, the vegetable and animal life of the Earth. We find them therefore unanimous in their veneration of Nature and their sensual celebration of life, birth, and death as expressed seasonally in all aspects of sexuality. (Adler, 306)

The honoring of nature among early cultures becomes a common link between the pantheon of Old Gnostic philosophies and similar Renaissance and Romantic artistic

ideologies. It also serves as a logical explanation illustrating Jung's idea of shared transcendent experience. The Jungian principle of personal unconscious asserts that beneath one's subliminal mind resides a deeper, ancient, collective omniscience, endowing mankind with his shared psychic inheritance (Guerin, 166). This is the first of three magical tenets Yeats believed was construed from an ancient era, a tenet to which he faithfully subscribes according to critic Hazard Adams' citation:

I believe three doctrines, which have as I think, been handed down from earlier times, and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices...

(1) That the borders of our mind are ever-shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy. (Adams, 153)

Yeats' postulation is ostensibly Jungian by definition alone; magic for Jung constructed a philosophical reality drawn from man's intuitive perceptions, a reality more concrete than the material dimensions of man's physical world. According to Gonzalez-Whippler, "Jung made of magic such a serious and profound study that many of his detractors accused him of falling away into mysticism...Magic as a subject of study was long considered to be outside the sphere of academic interest. For many centuries it was frowned upon as being unworthy of scientific study and as an enemy of religion and the social order (Gonzalez-Whippler, 8). In Jung's own day, likened to Yeats' and the present, academia scoffed at magic's credibility, disclaiming its scholastic value and fearing its threat to the established order of social and orthodox powers. Yeats' premise concerning magic's ancient origins is not only Jungian but also quite correct; the transcultural, timeless phenomenon of worshipping nature as a spiritual expression is tied to ancient man's earliest organized theosophy. If this cultural phenomenon of revering a natural, universal spirit more valuable and potent than one's own material reality (such as Jung surmises spiritual order to be) is part and parcel to magic, which in practice threatens orthodoxy, society, and its materialistic focus, then the progressive encroachment and

eventual dominion of an advancing social construct discourages, dispels, and unconscionably blasphemes man's far more valuable artistic vision: a tragic contention within The Secret Rose's central theme, and a primary concern for Yeats himself.

As far as the philosophical concerns of Old Gnosis extended, all ancient cultures had to logically reconcile natural phenomena that cyclically manifested in dichotomous relationships: night and day, moon and sun, summer abundance and winter famine, gathering vegetation and hunting flesh, sex and death, Earth and Cosmos. Respectively, each idea was collected into two opposing bodies, animated and dietized into sexual dualisations of female and male. Hence the primary concept of each pair embodies the Great Goddess or Earth Mother: the passive, gestating principle of life; her male consort and equal partner becomes the Great God: the active, fertilizing source of life. The dichotomous organization itself as a unified formula reconciles spiritual, natural, and material cycles with one axiom. The Goddess principle, as the tangible, sensual aspect of man's environment providing his growth, health, and nourishment both physically and sexually, offers a comforting, maternalistic presence of guardianship to her worshippers. Therein the Great Goddess concept of Earth netted foremost celebration and artistic tribute from varied cultures. Earth as an organic, living entity follows along the lines of philosopher James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis; an additional spiritual aspect of nature extended to man's own artistic vision becomes Yeats' Anima Mundi, his second tenet of magic wherein "our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself" (Adams, 153). This spiritual awareness also establishes what Druid priest and scholar Philip Carr-Gomm states is "the essence of the practice in Druidry of 'honoring Place'" (Carr-Gomm, 146). Carr-Gomm continues to assert: "The Druid tradition is first and foremost a tradition of the land. It is an Earth religion. It requires a listening to the earth. But it is also a wisdom tradition, and as such carries a heritage" (Carr-Gomm, 10). This heritage is purely Celtic in scope, steeped in myth and the passion for artistic expression, coupled with a veneration for anti-orthodox spirituality in communion with

nature, and a strong, heroic sense of Irish community, pride, and continuity: fertile ground for the nationalist poet of mystical interests. Likewise Yeats' art, The Secret Rose itself, is the perfect means of preserving this rich heritage. Hence Druidism explored in a literary context defends itself in tandem with the artistic endeavor that shapes it, and the Irish culture that embodies it. Carr-Gomm prefaces Adept Ross Nichols historically accurate survey Druidry, citing the theosophy's cultural relevance even beyond relieving national alienation, embracing orthodox disenchantment, and resurrecting Celtic heritage:

[Druidry] creates a forum into which we can bring three different aspects of our lives. Within Druidry we can bring our concern for the environment, which is one's love for Nature, into our relationship with our spiritual concerns, and into relationship with our artistic concerns. Ritual and poetry, dance and spiritual practice, personal development and ecological concern all find their place within Druid work. Rather than competing for our time and attention, they mutually interact, one with another, enriching our lives and delineating a sacred space which acts as a crucible to our creativity. (Nichols, 15)

While mutually sating one's cultural, esoteric, and social concerns, Druidism focuses upon the product of man's creative spiritual expression within his natural environment. Composition and construction, aesthetic or pragmatic, in any of their sensory or physical forms are all born of man's creative desire, whether those forms manifest in an architectural design or three notes of music. Thus Celtic theosophy easily reconciles spiritual inspiration with material manifestation, as each is interdependent upon the other in harmonious balance. Spiritual Gnosis coexisting in a material environment posed no conflict for the ancient Celts--their religion empowered it, their art celebrated it, and their culture endorsed it. This unifying principle of congruence found within Druidry extends beyond the universal-material relationship and the supposed divisions both Bloom

and orthodox society erect between spirit, nature, and man. It also serves as the foundation for all manifestations of esoteric dualism, both magical and pagan:

[Magicians and Druids] know that what appear to be opposites of matter, form, energy and force are not really opposing at all. They are simply different manifestations of each other. Even the Celts understood this [and believed] that this world is only part of reality, that divinity is both male and female. (Conway, 45)

Just as no spiritual division exists between universe and Earth, reality and imagination, poetic spirit and creative material, no separation fragments God from Goddess; the opposing concepts in union create the whole, while the whole accounts for its own dichotomy and every ensuing balanced tangent of the primary dualistic pair. Mythologically, this construct accounts for the pantheon of deities stemming from the principle Goddess and God as various shades of that single, universal dichotomy. Concerning Druidry, this traditional philosophical formula is particularly valuable as it shaped Celtic culture, directing entire communities whose collective duty was to socially uphold and spiritually defend the construct.

To this end Celtic mythology, the framework for The Secret Rose tales and evident through direct symbolic references, develops the Celtic body of religious, cultural, and historical traditions. The myths serve as creation tales, spun of legendary deities and heroes, explaining the development of Druidry, and organizing its worship throughout the cyclical year. In essence, the myth unifies the opposition between realms of reality and imagination, creating one universe wherein spirit and man, God and Celt interrelate, accounting for Irish ancestry, all bound within Druidic theosophy. The interdependence of myth and esoteric religious organization as both a cultural heritage and a social embodiment also is vital to magical philosophy. Gonzalez-Whipple concisely states that "essential to the magical belief of a race are the etiological myths that explain the origins of mankind and the universe in general. These myths lie at the core of magic and religion

alike and are the spark that ignites human mysticism (Gonzalez-Whippler, 19). Myth as the root of a magical-religious construction becomes both a mystical and a poetic tenet for Yeats, who proposed "that whatever the great poets affirmed in their finest moments was the nearest [artists] could come to an authoritative religion, and that their mythology, their spirits of water and wind were but literal truth" (Adams, 153). Indeed water and wind, season and direction, holiday and legend are just a few of Druidry's key mytho-religious elements that punctuate Yeats' tales with greater esoteric depth, supporting the dominant spiritual ideal that originates with the God/dess.

The Secret Rose's ostensible Druidic current begins with the staple of Druidry itself—God and Goddess, in which natural elements and concepts of human nature are enmeshed in spiritual form. The God-Goddess system must account for every tangible, sensual, and ideological construct of man's perceived environment coherently. It integrates and thereby embodies dissimilar concepts equally by fracturing the unified spirit into a sexual binary dynamic, and then dividing each opposing fragment of that single binary into another dichotomous pair, continuously and systematically. This constant division of a single source into myriad concepts maintains a delicately balanced interrelationship between the whole which is universal spirit, the primary binary equation of God and Goddess, and each resulting layer of perfect oppositions. This formula accounts for every facet of God and Goddess which becomes its own organic unity. The Druidic male aspect of unity is the Dagda as he is principally named in myth, yet his definition is wrought with many associated titles and traits:

THE DAGDA: "The Good God;" "All-Father;" Great God; Lord of the Heavens; Father of the gods and men; Lord of Life and Death; the Arch-Druid; God of Magic; High King of the Tuatha De Danaan [the spiritual ancestry of the Celts]...God of Death and Rebirth; master of all trades; lord of perfect knowledge...First among musicians, warriors, artisans, all knowledge. (Conway, 107-8)



The Dagda is both unity and every independent but necessarily interrelated concept he embodies, notwithstanding musicians, warriors, and artisans of which he is patron. Dagda also manifests in all masculine gods of a lesser scope. Therefore, he is Cernunnos, Horned God of the Hunt; the Green Man of the Forest; Lugh of the Long Arm, chief warrior of the Light; Llyr of the Sea; Bel of Fire and Beltaine; Ogma, inventor of Druidic script: all personages mentioned in The Secret Rose, lending their legends of fame, and symbolic allusions to the tales. Dagda is his mortal survivors, the Celts, and progressively the contemporary men of Ireland as inheritors of the God's spiritual nobility and prowess. He is finally of course his own male children, including Angus—a name of keen interest to readers as the protagonist in both "Where There is Nothing, There is God," and "The Heart of the Spring." Angus according to Druidic myth is Ireland's son, prodigy of the land, and thus nationalism personified (Conway, 103). Noted for his golden harp of enchanting music, Angus, God of youth, love, and beauty illustrates the ideal supplicator of all that is artistic spiritual beauty: the Secret Rose itself. Rightfully so, it is Angus the pagan wizard who reposes amongst the roses and lilies that envelop his overgrown woodland monastery, courting Ireland's Fates and fairies in pursuit of life's eternal secret of youth, beauty, abundance, and mystery. It is Angus, nomad priest, who has evocational access to the Great Spirit, enabling him to enlighten a young child. In "Where There is Nothing, There is God," Angus with his overt connection to the Angus of Celtic myth exhumes far more nobility and purity of heart than the company of Christian monks he keeps. The brotherhood of monks rudely chastises its young pupil Olioll, whom the monks readily dismiss as "the stupidest of [Brother Dove's] scholars" (94), although the boy's keen curiosity of comic order and his innate trust in Angus demonstrate otherwise. The child's mind is one "that would listen to every wandering sound and brood upon every wandering light" (96). Olioll is distracted by the poetic dance of distant melodies, of sun and shadow: his is the mind of an artist naturally drawn to Angus, which the orthodox

monastery dismisses as obtuse. The Order's myopism extends to its pompous misinterpretation of Olioll's newfound academic discipline:

Olioll, who had always been stupid and unteachable, grew clever and alert, and this was the more miraculous because it had come of a sudden...At first Brother Dove thought this was an answer to his own prayers to the Virgin, and took it for the great proof of the love she bore him, but when many far more fervid prayers had failed to add a single what-sheaf to the harvest, he began to think that the child was trafficking with bards, or druids, or witches, and resolved to follow and watch. (96-7)

Yeats' passage is replete with irony, sharply contrasting the egotistical Order from Angus, the Celtic embodiment of salvation whom the monks finally appeal to enlighten their own brotherhood in cognizance of his grace. During their state of ignorance, however, the monks rashly assume credit for Olioll's sudden clarity. Brother Dove's supplications to his virginal icon remain ineffectual in comparison to Angus' prayers for the child. Where Brother Dove's concerns lie far more emphatically with the wheat crop and the Virgin's demonstration of her love for him in lieu of the child she is sought to aid, Angus operates from a motive of selfless concern, a heroic premise that merits his spiritual potency while raising the biased suspicions of the monastery. Brother Dove supposes the child is in league with blasphemous pagans, likening bards, druids, and witches to the same anti-orthodox deviation, while he himself resorts to dishonest behavior of subterfuge to sate his ill-curiosity. Ironically, Olioll is trafficking with druids, when one considers Angus' explicit connection to the god of Druid lore. As such, Angus' spiritual potency is that of Dagda, inarguably pagan in scope, eliciting an immediate response by the fragranced breath of the Divine itself unlike that of his orthodox counterpart, Brother Dove, whose pleas go unanswered from a silent icon. The perfumed white light, the phenomenon of the Rose whence it is called, demonstrates Angus' evocative strength and sheer commitment to the Sprit that eludes the brotherhood's orthodoxy. The Order

heralds Angus as "the lover of God, and the first of those who have gone to live in the wild places and among the wild beasts...that he might labor only with song to the Lord" (98). Angus as a true Celtic figure merits inherent spiritualism through a decidedly pagan path; he abdicates the constructs of orthodoxy to commune with Grace where, according to Druidry, it is readily found: in the wilds of nature Herself.

Nature as an aspect of the Goddess demonstrates the female principle that compliments its masculine counterpart. Akin to Dagda and his associated personages, the Great Mother Danu as the ultimate matriarch dissembles into myriad Goddess correlations, each embodying specific aspects of the collective feminine whole. Thus Danu, great matriarch of the Tuatha De Danaan is equally Ceriddwen the Earth Mother, as well as innumerable legions of female heroines, warriors, deities, and mortals. In opposition to the glorious God of the Sun with his singular brightness, the Goddess is a patron of the moon in its three phases: new to waxing, full, and waning to dark. Hence one of the Goddess' secondary divisions from her primary unified self manifests in a triad of three aspects, each in accordance with a specific moon cycle, each in opposition to and thereby united in conjoinment with the God in his youth, maturity, and agedness respectively. Her triad, known as the triple aspect of the Goddess, is defined as follows:

To the Celtic peoples, the Triple Goddess was represented by Anu as the Maiden, Babd as the Mother, and Macha as the Crone...

The Maiden is essential to the continuation of all life; her color is white, denoting innocence and newness. She is Springtime, the dawn, eternal youth and vigor, enchantment and seduction, the waxing Moon.

The Mother is the ripeness of womanhood, the boiling pot of Babd which is the richness of life. Her color is red, the color of blood and the life force.

The Mother is Summer, the day, lustiness, teacher, the Full Moon.

The Crone, or Dark Mother, sometimes called the Hag, has black as her color, the color of darkness where all life rests before rebirth. This aspect

of the Goddess is Winter, night, wisdom, counsel, the gateway to death and reincarnation, the Waning Moon. (Conway, 47)

The Druidic philosophy of the Triple Goddess delineates its own symbolic system, unifying archetype—Maiden, Mother, Crone—with a specific moon phase, color, season, time of day, cycle of life or age, character role, and varied theoretical concepts. The symbolic system itself acts as an organic unifier between the spiritual and physical, cosmic and natural, abstract and concrete, accounting for and interrelating all aspects of woman and her perceived environment. This selfsame system links The Secret Rose tales via continual descriptive references of sunrise and sunset, spring and winter, east and west, red and white: all elements that conceptually reflect the omnipresent Goddess. While the Goddess archetypes and their symbolic associations remain consistent, archetype names readily interchange, allowing varied deities and mortals alike to assume her identity. Danu is herself and her daughters; her daughters are both themselves, their sisters, and so forth as the Goddess identity reflects forward to the women of Ireland and across to the female literary figures in Yeats' work. "Of Costello the Proud" features the White Goddess of birth and growth, the Maiden, as Oona: the virginal youth consumed by death and thus eternally transfixed in beauty. "The Wisdom of the King" illustrates Babd the Mother as "The High-Queen of the Island of the Woods" (88), a Druidess and mother of the King who dies in the throes of labor; in her absence appears the dark aspect of the Goddess, Macha, figured in the multitudinous Crones of the Gray Hawk, who "come from the darkness of the Great wood" (88), and baptize the infant king with a song of pagan wisdom. Yeats resurrects the triad archetypes time and again, who surface either as a recognizable mythological aspect of the Triple Goddess like the haggardly Washer of the Dead in "The Curse of the Fire and Shadows," or otherwise as the unified embodiment of all three Goddess interchangeably, such as Cleena the Shee, Cleena the blood mortal, and Cleena cloaked as hag Whinny Byrne demonstrate Maiden, Mother, and Crone respectively within the Hanrahan collection.

Perhaps the most ostensible example of the Goddess embodied is Queen Dectira in Yeats' first The Secret Rose tale, "The Binding of the Hair." Dectira's name alone suggests the character's symbolic personification. According to Watson, Yeats favored the name after having read John Rhys' *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Celtic Heathendom* (1888), whose etymology cited Dectira as "a personification of the light that overspreads the sky before the sun appears above the horizon" (Watson, 245). Dectira is the Dawn, and therein the corresponding White Goddess of the triple aspect whose character description Yeats colors with simile and metaphor further strengthening this connection via Druidic corresponding references. Dectira is of course a queen of youth and beauty like Anu herself, with a demeanor "straight and still like a white candle," her purity of life and radiance Aodh's Rose of Desire and Lily of Peace: a springtime bouquet for which he will surely lay down his life in sacrifice (85). According to Druidic symbolic correspondences, the sunrise, the spring, and blooming flowers--the properties of the White Goddess--are commonly ruled by the element of Air, whose dominion appropriately extends over the East, the direction of the dawn. Dectira is indeed one of Yeats' wind spirits from that tradition of great poets he identifies as religious truth. Accordingly, Yeats' specific description of Dectira, much like all his literary Goddess incarnates, maintains the precise Druidic pattern of corresponding symbols for each aspect of the deity. Tracing these precise Druidic symbolic references as Yeats employed them only demonstrates his knowledge of this system, as well as his deliberate use of them, thus disproving critic William O'Donnell's rather ignorant statement that Yeats' mystical symbolism was at best some random, disorganized menagerie:

If we restrict our study of the occult lore which Yeats chose to incorporate into his art...[those select details] offer surprisingly little help in understanding the general issues. In comparison with the vast array of

symbols that Yeats encountered in occult text and rituals, he made public use of very few, and many of those he did use are confined to incidental details that are either self-explanatory or easily accessible in non-occult traditions. The process of selection was so random that the individual items cannot be combined into a significant, comprehensible aggregate. (O'Donnell, 57)

O'Donnell's statement serves as a prime example of an orthodox scholar ignorantly discrediting the exacting and meaningful occult references of Yeats' intention--those of Druidic context--of which traditional academia knows nothing about and therefore is unable to discern. O'Donnell's widely misled interpretation, replete with many glaring faults, naturally lends to his own discredit. It demonstrates his supposed study of occult lore, what little if any he actually engaged in, as shallow and utterly inaccurate. Yeats' precise alignment of Druidic correspondences creates a dominant characterization of Celtic figures; such details are least of all incidental, certainly not self-explanatory as O'Donnell's premise demonstrates, and are nowhere accurately defined in any non-occult tradition of which O'Donnell can avail himself. The single, significant aggregate that eludes O'Donnell and canonical academia is of course Druidry, eclipsed from orthodox criticism wherever Yeats chooses to illustrate it. Undeniably however, its illustration within The Secret Rose is unquestionable. Well documented is Yeats' enthusiasm for occult theosophy, which makes deliberate use of corresponding symbolism and helioatry common to Celtic mythology (Seiden, 34-36). Such as myth, poetry, and art commonly become their own spiritual expressions of magical philosophy, a philosophy delineated by an exacting symbolic design, the symbol becomes a magical vehicle that taps into universal spirit and shapes Gnostic vision. This is Yeats' last tenet of magical doctrine, the first two emphasizing man's shared imagination born of the universal mind or Anima Mundi, and the third stating "that this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols" (Adams, 153). According to Yeats' philosophy, Anima Mundi or Spirit of

the Earth not only imparts the poet-magician's creative genius, but also determines the symbolic language by which he artistically translates his vision. "By means of magic as Yeats conceived it," critic George Mills Harper states

he understands nature as a sentient unity, a Great mind or Memory, he may discover the secrets of the universe, of the past as well as the present, of the invisible as well as the visible. These truths are revealed or transmitted in abstract or metaphysical language; and it is the function of the chosen spirit, the seer to project his visions in the concrete imagery and symbolism of art. (Harper, 104)

Yeats' principles of magic, predicated upon the active, omnipresent Earth Spirit of Anima Mundi, are decidedly Druidic in design. While it is too bold to presume Yeats' philosophy is exclusively Druidic in nature, it certainly reflects Druidic theosophy as a strong Romantic precursor, whose precisely coordinated symbolic system conveys the human condition of concurrently spiritual and material environments. As such Yeats' inherently Druidic symbolism, one not only suited to his magical philosophy but also ideally applied to The Secret Rose's Celtic subtext, permeates the entire collection. Furthermore, Yeats' symbolic pattern is constantly established in juxtaposition, mimicking the Celtic God/dess polarity, and demonstrating Druidry's corresponding elemental system. Just as the God/dess equation divides and subdivides into binary counterparts, these individual and multitudinous counterparts, spiritual and physical concepts in and of themselves, are then reclassified under a corresponding table of elements complimenting the God/dess and strengthening the characterization of His and Her particular attributes as deities. The elemental table itself divides into quaternities, with each grouping reconciling a specific color, direction, time of day, season, symbol, magical tool, rite and ritual, and material endeavor which the principle deities themselves and their interdependent aspects personify.

Although this symbolic network is incredibly intricate and far too detailed for the purposes of a focused critical application, the cursory understanding of Druidry's elemental layout suffices to emphasize Yeats' purposeful and obvious employment of it in The Secret Rose, particularly in its binary pattern. In Druidry, the Goddess commands the receptive energies of water and earth, whereas the God rules the projective powers of fire and air. Established cyclically, the four elements of air, fire, water, and earth symbolically trace the cycle of the day with dawn, noon, dusk, and night; the cycle of the year with Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter; the cardinal directions of east, south, west, and north traced by the colors of the rising sun—red, the brightness of high noon—white, the dulling dusk—gray, and the midnight darkness—black, respectively (Conway, 184-5). Three of these colors naturally refer to the triple Goddess aspects, thus incorporating her into the system as a vital counterpart. All four corresponding colors Yeats makes deliberate use of, in tandem with their conceptual associations. Wind and fire mutually convey the raw spiritual power of Yeats' Rose, while their elemental color associations of red and white, continually juxtaposed within the collection add another layer of metaphor to the text. For red and white in Druidry symbolically convey far more than just their simple elemental associations: "it is in the two colors of red and white that we find the clue to [Druidic concepts of] fertility...for white and red symbolize male and female, sperm and blood, moon and sun...and of the need to unite the two principles to create abundant life" (Carr-Gomm, 49). Within a Druidic context, white and red symbolically illustrate the premise of binary unification, the ultimate reconciliation of contrary entities. This unification in turn echoes Druidic reconciliation between the contrasting interests of the aesthetic and the pragmatic, the artistic and the utilitarian, the spirit and the material. Hence Yeats overlays red and white, and thereby their conceptual associations, in stark and powerfully suggestive images both glorious and horrific. From "The Binding of the Hair" to the Hanrahan collection, red roses intertwine with white lilies; the white arms of fairies beckon to the Irish sprites bedecked in red accouterments. Hanrahan the Red



wanders aimlessly along a white path, reposes against a whitewashed wall, or sits musing under the full, pale moon (152). In "The Curse of the Fire and Shadows," the blood of slaughtered monks besmears their white habits, while a crackling red fire consumes their holy community under a blanket of crisp white stars (113, 117). With equal consistency, Yeats makes deliberate use of the other two elemental colors, therein fully establishing the symbolic quarternies. He clothes those spiritual figures and mythical beings which embody the Rose in silvery gray, from the Crones of the Dark Wood to the ghostly visions of Cleena and Oona as they spurn their ignorant lovers. The color black enshrouds the span of night during which the Crones arrive and the King departs, Angus the pagan priest and the Gleeman mutually approach their respective monastic lodgings, the cursed Puritan troopers are misled to their own deaths, Oona Herne evokes the murder of her entire family, and Dectira's noble battle rages. In fact, the principle action of each individual tale throughout The Secret Rose unfolds at night, allowing Yeats yet another corresponding binary--that of dusk and dawn, wherein many a character from the expelled Gleeman, to the noble Knight, to the proud Costello, commences the tale regarding the sunset, often in supplication, and concludes the tale unfailingly in sacrifice just at the crest of dawn. Although the boundaries between quarternies intermingle upon rare occasion as God/dess aspects share like congruencies, it does not in any way dissemble the clear corresponding symbols of each elemental group, nor mar the focused characterization of any persona.

Of far more value to the esoteric reader is Yeats' symbolic system illustrated in totality. Druid theosophy as an artistic credo appreciates colors, motions, shapes, and natural phenomena interdependently as a harmonious dance of dramatic creativity, a symphony of spiritual existence, a complex tale of humanity, and a metaphor of universality. As such, its artistic language, the symbolic system itself, works not in isolation of any specific symbol but rather in harmony of the entire God/dess construct Yeats employs fully intact.

Yeats' reconstruction of the Druid God/dess binary extends far beyond those characters within The Secret Rose who ostensibly embody them through symbolic associations and mythical references, however. Yeats also replicates the cyclical interrelationship between Goddess and God throughout the entire Celtic year, which organizes the premise of Druidry as a religion, and defines Yeats' code of the true spiritual veneration needed to redeem a fallen Ireland and repair its muse. Once established, the deified binary construct of God/dess stemming from a dichotomy of the Celts' perceived environment is then applied to the seasonal course of the year. The bright half of the year marked by the waxing sun belongs to the Goddess; correspondingly, the dark half of the year wherein night equals or exceeds the day's length is the God's domain. Therein winter, spring, summer and fall are accounted for, with both deities either actively or passively present in each, their interrelationship prompting the course of time to progress in cyclical harmony. The annual cycle, its seasons and corresponding natural phenomena of fertilization, birth, abundance, maturity, harvesting, aging, death, repose, and eventual rebirth, are reconciled by the sexual, harmonious interaction of the deities throughout the year. Thus the year's progression is one of the deities acting in union: Anu and her young consort loving and mating marked by Beltaine on May 1; Babd's and Lugh's marital conjoinment on August 1st's celebration Lughnassadh; the aged God's death and parting from Macha upon Samhain during October 31; and the God's rebirth from the Goddess' womb on February 1, known as Imbolc (Carr-Gomm, 146-8). The seasonal myth demonstrates the Triple Goddess progressing through each of her aspects in union with the nubile, mature, and aged God respectively, while supporting the social constructs of marriage and family. Of particular relevance is the Goddess' immortality: she ages but does not die. As the gesticulator of life, she must survive to birth and nurture her God, the fertilizing principle, so they may unite and thus continue the cycle of life. It is the God who must die in sacrifice to this life principle, the Goddess' spiritual ideal, in order to facilitate both her continuity and his own rebirth. Sacrifice then becomes the mainstay of

spiritual veneration; sacrifice sustains life and ensures community. Surely enough, sacrifice for the sake of the artistic ideal remains Yeats' thematic premise throughout The Secret Rose, defined by Druidic theosophy. A demonstrated sacrifice determines the heroic character of Yeats' protagonists who suffer, abdicate, and die to defend the poetic ideal: the Goddess embodied, the Goddess in aspect, the Goddess in spirit, the Spirit of the Rose. The interrelationship between protagonist and spirit, visionary and vision, bard and muse demanding sacrifice predominates The Secret Rose, as Yeats reincarnates this premise tale after tale. The sacrifice necessary to ensure artistic spirit--Yeats' Anima Mundi, Old Gnosis' Song of the Earth, and Druidry's Laughter in the Woods--is demanded of the protagonist time and again. Either he satisfies this need maintaining his heroic premise as the God, much like the first tales illustrate, or the protagonist rejects his sacrificial role, disrupting the universal cycle, debasing his heroic premise, and blaspheming the eternal Goddess--a doleful condition expressed in the latter stories. Yeats establishes the sacrificial challenge by specifically pairing each literary manifestation of the God, be it the bards Aodh or Hanrahan, Angus the wizard or pagan priest, kings, knights, or nobles with the appropriate aspect of the Goddess incarnate, in spirit, or in symbolic expression. Where the formula seems to collapse with the Goddess absent, the protagonist appears having nothing to defend; however, Yeats maintains the continuity of the Druidic God/dess binary with a concise symbolic reference. The Goddess need not manifest in flesh or apparition to possess a valid, determinable presence within any of The Secret Rose tales. Certainly such embodiments are more explicit and therein simpler to trace: God-Goddess relationships between Aodh and Dectira, Hanrahan and Cleena, Costello and Oona are readily apparent; thus one easily determines the protagonists' sacrifices as either met or abandoned. Even those characters who defend an apparent spiritual principle denoted by some sensory evidence, like Angus' "breath of roses" that emanates from a bright holy light or the Knight's fragrant vision of the Rose itself, have some perceptible evidence of existence to defend, thereby plausibly maintaining the

ostensible relationship between the deities (97). In several tales, the interrelationship preserving the Druidic cyclical God/dess myth and establishing Yeats' theme of necessary sacrifice is no longer explicitly illustrated. Within "The Heart of the Spring" for example, Angus the wizard, while depreciating his own age and mortality, pursues an ideal of which he has only heard secondhand:

I longed for a life whose abundance would fill centuries, I scorned the life of fourscore winters. I would be--nay I *will* be!--like the ancient Gods of the land. I read in my youth, in a Hebrew manuscript I found in a Spanish monastery, that there is a moment, after the sun has entered the Ram and before he has passed the Lion, which trembles with the Song of the Immortal Powers, and that whosoever finds this moment and listens to the Song shall become like the Immortal Powers themselves. (121)

Angus puts his faith in an ideal discovered through the tales of the Kabbalah—a book of ancient Jewish mysticism (Watson, 249). He then confirms the validity of the ideal and its realistic attainment via fairies, gnomes, and the Shue of Ireland; his validations are those of magic, myth, and orthodox insubstance. Hence his muse remains undemonstrated throughout the tale, while his ultimate spiritual unification is doubted by his servant, if not by readers and critics themselves. In comparison, the young beast king in "The Wisdom of the King" has no further evidence of the kindred Goddess he seeks other than her gray feathers which overrun his hair. Likewise, his fate is suspect as to whether the king ever unites with the questionable Goddess of his search. Yeats' expelled Gleeman from "The Crucifixion of the Outcast" has absolutely no evidence of his Goddess whatsoever: no wraith plagues him, no consort loves him, no ancestral trait flourishes within him as evidence of the spirit for which to sacrifice. He has simply his isolated gnosis—a haunting intuition beyond the boundaries of sensory manifestation:

And I have been more alone upon the roads and by the sea, because I heard in my heart the rustling of the rose-bordered dress of her who is more

subtle than Angus, the Subtle-Hearted, and more full of the beauty of laughter than Conan the Bald, and more full of the wisdom of tears than White-Breasted Deirdre, and more lovely than a bursting dawn to them that are lost in the darkness. (105)

Both the Gleeman's gnosis and his crucifixion are a torment; his Goddess is so illusory that he bemoans his own sacrifice to her with an outcry that reflects Christ's plea upon the cross. In all three examples, no explicit form of the Goddess presents itself, at once undermining the protagonists' efforts to sustain her, trivializing their conviction of her existence, and seemingly collapsing the balanced construct of God/dess along with every cyclical myth founded upon it. This supposed lapse of structure, a theory construed by critics as Yeats' disjointed use of symbols, lapse of mythical continuity and the like, is as illusory as the Goddess' absence in any tale. Yeats' inappropriation of the Druidic God/dess formula only holds from an orthodox standpoint unfamiliar with the concept that Druidry itself accounts for the Goddess' definable presence in each successive story. In fact, should the explicit Goddess form for which the protagonist must sacrifice to merit his unity be removed--lovers, apparitions, and all--The Secret Rose tales would still account for her propinquity, maintain the binary relationship between deities, and support Yeats' theme of obligatory sacrifice. Keeping in mind that the Druidic Goddess is not just a moon deity but the Earth Mother equally, she embodies Nature as the feminine Anima, whose associated domain in tandem with her lunar cycle is that of the woods. The forest is of primary importance to the Druids: venerated as an emblem of the Goddess, the gestator of life, the grove provides the ideal setting for ritual as her sacred womb. Specific trees in fact are heralded as organic symbols, representing notions of life, gnosis, and spiritual harmony. Along with these correspondences is a specific letter assigned to each sacred tree, therein composing the Druids' Olgam alphabet. The consonants themselves reconcile the Goddess' lunar aspect; the vowels unify Her in totality with her God:

The consonants of the alphabet of trees represent the thirteen lunar cycles occurring over the course of a year. All trees chosen to represent them reflect the mystery and the magic of the moon. Hidden aspects, lost secrets, the wondrous beauty of night are all qualities fleeting perceived [in the absence of Gnosis], if at all. The significance of the vowels and their true equivalents...[are the] visible expressions of the seasons that they herald. Pure and simple, the vowels mark the passage of the sun in its waxing and waning phases during a year of time. (Pepper, 33)

Within the total congruous structure of Druidic theosophy, the site of a forest or grove as a symbol of the Goddess principle demonstrates its own inherent harmony: uniting the goddess' lunar aspect with her Earth self, and that unified entity with her Lord, demonstrated throughout the Celtic year. Thus the forest sustains the premise of the feminine Anima as a source of ultimate conjunction. A protagonist's return to the woods is a return to the Goddess and the Druidic law that defines her. The forest is a constant presence in The Secret Rose, working symbolically in tandem with the Rose itself as dual aspects of the same universal entity. Angus the wizard inhabits a pagan woodland monastery--his Rose envelops him; the King returns to the dark wood of his ancestry, where the High Queen Mother and the Crones may spiritually embrace him; the Gleeman's' life ebbs away upon a cross fashioned of forestry--rejected by beggars and monks alike, his sacrifice is all the more poignant, noble and true--the Rose shall relieve him. In fact, the majority of protagonists who make their sacrifice for the sake of the Rose do so within the depths of the forest. All the heroes from Aodh to Hanrahan die within the Earthen womb for the sake of the ideal. Angus the priest abdicates his monastic order for Her, the King abdicates his throne. Hanrahan, Aodh, the Wizard and the Knight all die safely in Her folds. Where neither the Goddess embodiment nor the woods appear, the sacrifice is not made in lieu of advancing orthodoxy. With varied twists of plot and

character but ultimate continuity of theme, Yeats preserves the premise of the Druidic God/dess interrelationship, its cyclical progression, and the sacrifice needed to sustain its integrity. Despite fulfillment or neglect of the God's sacrificial role, despite the varied physical, ethereal, or symbolic manifestations of the Goddess, Yeats continually preserves The Secret Rose's Druidic context, adding richness and depth to the tales through creative employment.

Yeats' precise use of the God/dess dynamic does not conclude with his reinvention and interrelation of the binary deities. For in Druidry, opposition only begins with the deities themselves; it continues to manifest throughout the pattern of the Celtic year founded upon the God/dess mythical cycle, and thus maintains the reconciled duality of the entire system. The annual progression of the Goddess and her Lord divides into the four greater sabbats of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltaine, and Lughnassadh, marking both the particular stage of involvement between Goddess and God, and the height of each natural season. This celebrational quaternary based upon the seasons readily transposes upon the Druidic tables of binary correspondences and oppositions, wherein they garner further conceptual meaning from the dual relationship in which they are placed. Druid Adept Ross Nichols elaborates upon the deeper meaning gained by the systematic congruence of the sabbats' correspondences:

The nature of the [Druidic] ceremonial year is best realized by the circle of designed opposites which are complementary...Bealteinne and Samhuinn have in common the contrasted magics of seasons. Bealteinne on 1 May has the supreme magic of blossom, the heavy magic of earth, the spells of the *Sidhe* people [the Celtic Shue— spiritual manifestations of the former Druidic deities], with the pentagram. Samhuinn has the more awesome magic of the death of time, the coming back to Earth of those who have passed its boundaries, a look into the depths of timelessness and the open door between worlds. (Nichols, 299)

Samhain and Beltaine in systematic opposition create powerful contrasts upon several conceptual levels. They dichotomize the seasonal cycle of the year pairing the height of the spring with that of the fall, the God/dess cycle of conjoinment with parting, and the life cycle linking sex with death. Recalling that the ceremonial cycle as part of the overall Celtic mythological scheme is etiological in function, the greater sabbats serve to define cosmic order, mortal origins, as well as Irish national heritage, of which Samhain and Beltaine play a prominent part. The sabbats specifically coincide with the arrival of the Celtic ancestry upon an already inhabited Ireland, and their victory over the previous colonizers ensuring a nobler reign of the nation:

The Tuatha De Danann (children of the Goddess Danu) ensued in the invasion of Ireland. some legends say they came from the sky, others say from far away islands. The four cities from which they originated were: Findias, Gorias, Murias, and Falias. They were skilled in poetry and magic. With them they brought four great treasures: Nuada's sword from Findias, Lugh's terrible spear from Gorias, the Dagda's cauldron from Murias, and the Stone of Fal (Lia Fail or Stone of Destiny) from Falias. The Tuatha de Danann landed on Beltaine (May 1), hidden by magic used by the Morrighu, Babd, and Macha. They met the armies of the Fir Bolg [colonizers from Greece or Spain] and the fomors on the Plain of the Sea near Leinster where they bargained for peace and the division of Ireland. But the Fir Bolg king Eochaid refused... (Conway, 91)

In seven years time, tensions between the Fir Bolg, with their cruel government, and the equitable Tuatha de Danann grew intolerable; hence arduous preparations for war began:

Just before the battle, while the Dagda was reconnoitering, he met the Morrighu, the war goddess, as she bathed in the river. In exchange for lying



with her, she promised him victory in battle. The two armies met on the eve of Samhain, and again engaged in a series of single combats. This time, however, the Tuatha de Danann were always healed by the next day and their swords and spears made new...The Tuatha de Danann were victorious, driving the remaining Formors back into the sea. The Morrighu and Babd went to the top of the high mountains to proclaim victory. But Babd prophesized the coming of the end of the gods. This prophesy was fulfilled when the mortal Gaelic Celts arrived, those called the Milesians. (Conway, 94-5)

This myth, accounting for Ireland's history and ancestry, incorporates the quarternies represented by the Tuatha's respective cities—one of each direction—in tandem with the four treasures imparting the Celtic culture with the favors of battle, poetry (the skill of the bard), magic (talent of the Druid), and fate. These quarternies are then encompassed by Beltaine and Samhain in binary relationship, marking the main action of the Tuatha's arrival and their ultimate victory in congruence with the God/dess cycle. The Tuathan victory itself is won only by great sacrifice, wherein Nuada, the Tuathan's High King is slaughtered defending his nation (Conway, 95). The story, adhering to the principle God/dess cycle wherein death becomes the necessary agent to preserve the continuity of life likewise demonstrates death as a sacrifice for Celtic victory. Therein the Druidic myth links a sense of nationalism with "the old ritual of the year: the mother goddess and the slain god," once again demanding the ritual sacrifice of the God to preserve the Goddess (Watson, 245). According to literary critic Phillip Marcus, such rituals "were sacrifices intended to restore the fertility of the land or the spiritual health of the polity" (Marcus, 51). The sacrifice as a thematic premise for Years therefore is not an end in itself, but a principle fortifying spirituality, song and poetry, nationalism, and a proud sense of Celtic tradition, collectively expressed by the mytho-historical dynamic shared between the Druidic sabbats of Samhain and Beltaine. Yeats faithfully maintains

the integrity of this Druidic corresponding scheme, its symbolic language and the crux of its theosophy by properly integrating the Samhain-Beltaine myth in accordance with the God-Goddess life cycle. The Secret Rose places Samhain and Beltaine in deliberate juxtaposition, at once independently between two tales and then interdependently within the Hanrahan collection.

"The Binding of the Hair" as The Secret Rose's first tale initiates the Druidic myth cycle, working upon three congruent levels: embodiment of the deities, sacrificial interrelationship of the God/dess, and the premise of Samhain. For "Binding of the Hair" with its "motif of the beautiful woman and the severed head" is more than a mere tale loosely "based upon some old Gaelic legend," as critics readily dismiss it (Watson, 245). Rather, it is the precise reworking of the Tuatha's legendary battle upon the eve of Samhain, when the sacrifice of the God is demanded as per the Celtic God/dess life cycle. Yeats explicitly supports this idea when setting the scene: the Queen's army lights a series of fires and sets watch for the enemy, while men-at-arms "sat in the large house, waiting the attack of certain nations of the People of the Bag" (83). Yeats' People of the Bag is a pseudonym for the Celtic Fir Bolg--the former colonizers of Ireland whom, according to Celtic myth, the Tuatha victoriously displace on Samhain (Watson, 232). Indeed, Dectira's army reigns triumphant upon her army's enunciation, "...we have slain the most, and the rest fled among the mountains," "but there was no part of the way where there was not fighting, and we have left many behind us" (86). Those of Dectira's troops left behind due to injury include Aodh himself, the Queen's bard and as such her complimentary God. The old and doting King Lua is spiritually tied to the waning health of the polity, and therein the sickening of the Goddess herself in aspect both Dectira and the nation her army defends. Hence timely sacrifice is demanded; Samhain, the sabbat marking Tuathan victory and death of the God has arrived, thus Aodh must lay down his life to preserve both his Goddess and the nation. Heroically, Aodh meets the challenge as

both the ideal Druid bard of song, and the God of sacrificial promise. Yeats' allusions of Aodh are purely Druidic and thus noble in fashion:

...the bard was famous, and claimed to be descended from the bard for whom the nations of Heber and Heremon cast lots at the making of the world...the young queen sat among her women, straight and still like a white candle, and listened as though there were no tale in the world but this tale of Aodh's, for the enchantment of his dream-heavy voice was in her ears; the enchantment of his dream-distraught history in her mind: how he would now live in the wrath of kings, now alone in the great forest...and, above all, how he had sat continually by her great chair telling of forays and battles, to hearten her war-weary men-at-arms, or chaunting histories and songs laden with gentler destinies for her ears alone, or, more often still, listening in silence to the rustling of her dress. (83-4)

Yeats' portrait of Aodh is replete with Celtic myth and spiritual nuance, creating the epitome protagonist: a true embodiment of the God whose promise of sacrifice is unhesitatingly offered. A legendary bard of esteemed Celtic lineage, Aodh demonstrates himself to be of true Druidic spirit; he will serve at the side of royalty as bards were often demanded, then retreat to the forest womb of his Goddess. For Her he weaves Celtic enchantments of ancient knowledge; for her he rallies the armies to victory with passionate tales. For the sake of his Goddess Dectira, Aodh proffers heartfelt songs and sits in silent, adoring contemplation of her. Overtly linked to a Druid identity via his role as the bard, talent of song and magic, and Yeats' likening his repose at Dectira's feet before the great battle to a "Druid sleep," Aodh as the God is the privileged consort to the Goddess (85). Dectira has no active relationship with the foolish King Lua in the context of the story; the king is a non-presence, passively slumbering as his nation goes to war. Hence Aodh serves as Dectira's active lover, her god and binary counterpart. As such, he is bound to the sacrifice ordained by Celtic myth. Furthermore, the deities, cognizant of their role in

the cycle of life's continuity, are Gnosis itself, fully aware of their inevitable and tragic parting. Possessing the vision of their own forthcoming separation, Dectira and Aodh both emit an air of palpable melancholy, her "long, inexplicable sigh" echoing his as Aodh rises from the Queen's side to satisfy his sacrificial duty (84). The characters' common foreknowledge plus one's understanding of Samhain's premise, the God/dess cycle, and the sacrifice they require by definition lends greater emotional depth to the story, which Yeats fortifies with clever foreshadowing. Aodh's musical tributes to his Queen are at once loving and melancholy, played with notes "as soft and sad as though they were the cooing of doves over the Gates of Death" (84). Aodh cherishes the Goddess he must widow for Orchil--the Celtic Goddess of winter's cold embrace (Watson, 245). With this foreknowledge, Aodh's and Dectira's parting is a sorrowful one, replete with desperate forestalling as Dectira requests one last song of Aodh before the morning, when by myth she as Dawn must reign and the sacrifice is demanded. In truest love and nobility, Aodh promises her the music of his heart--a promise kept in the heart of the forest itself, just before the break of day. These details cleverly maintain the continuity of both the Druidic myth and its symbolic correspondences, which express the heroic role of the God--the precise system unclear to traditional critic Hazard Adams who claims that Yeats' "early work expresses neither the individual nor the central form of [Irish] myth...which had been dispelled to shadows through the Celtic twilight" (Adams, 155). Yeats' appropriation of Samhain's etiological myth in perfect congruence with the God/dess cycle aptly demonstrates the author's attempt as nothing short of success. Aodh's sacrificial promise itself is met upon two levels: he dies in battle defending the Queen, and he sings her the verses of his heart once they reunite. Aodh's mortal sacrifice for Dectira in no way impedes the ultimate reconciliation of God and Goddess; according to Druidic theology, unification demands sacrifice. Of course O'Donnell, unfamiliar with Druidic theosophy as an appropriate critical approach for The Secret Rose tales, rashly dismisses "Binding of the Hair" as "one of [Yeats'] weakest stories. Its hero...with Adept-like powers...does not

however win union for Aodh with his completely mortal queen" (O'Donnell, 69).

O'Donnell's ignorance of the detailed Celtic theology upon which the tale is established leaves him unfit to determine the true nature of spiritual union via sacrifice which Yeats illustrates with precision. While O'Donnell is so pompous to assume Yeats shares his own opinion regarding the tale's supposed lack of artistic merit, Yeats further supports the story's mythological context of merited unification or spiritual reconciliation on two counts. First, by virtue of the fact that Aodh's two-fold sacrificial promise is kept in the recesses of the forest or the Goddess' earthen womb, the setting symbolically indicates God/dess reconciliation; secondly, Aodh's song is ultimately silenced by an aspect of the Goddess herself. Upon completion of Aodh's verses

a troop of crows, heavy like fragments of that sleep older than the world,  
swept out of the darkness, and , as they passed, smote those ecstatic lips  
with the points of their wings; and the head fell from the bush and rolled  
over at the feet of the queen. (87).

Once Aodh's promise to Dectira is fulfilled, the spirit that animates his lips is lifted away by crows. According to Druidic mythology, a crow is the specific symbol of Morrighu, goddess of war, fate death and rebirth in her dark aspect (Conway, 113). Morrighu is another personage of Macha, dark cycle of the moon. It is Morrighu, persona of the dark Goddess who manifests at Samhain; it is Morrighu who claims Aodh's life upon his sacrifice, and it is her womb within which he as the God regenerates in spiritual conjoinment until their carnal union on Beltaine.

Once inherently reconciled in spiritual unification, "The Binding of the Hair" is then complemented in deliberate juxtaposition to "The Heart of the Spring," wherein Yeats thematically sustains the continuity of the Samhain-Beltaine dichotomy of The Secret Rose. Much like "The Binding of the Hair" has implicit Druidic references, nuances, and symbolic correspondences that critics blatantly overlook, "The Heart of the Spring" is subject to the same limited critical interpretations. Again, one must be familiar

with Druidic context to discern that the actual heart of the spring itself, the epiphany of the Rose and Angus' moment of spiritual union, occurs precisely at the dawn of Beltaine, thereby complementing the eve of Samhain upon which The Secret Rose tales commence, and maintaining the interrelationship of the respective sabbats.

The Druidic context of "The Heart of the Spirit" varies from "The Binding of the Hair" insofar as the Goddess is no longer an embodied ideal for which the protagonist must sacrifice his life. With the progression of society, Gaelic Ireland and its legends, heroes, and Gods of Old Gnosis have waned, reworked into mere tales of enchantment to which the protagonist Angus subscribes. He is in fact the last vestige of Druidry in practice: Yeats' symbolic allusions from Angus' garb, to his wand, to his residence all lead to the dominant impression of his Druidic identity. Angus dons the traditional blue robe of the Druid bardic order, a garment now worn and threadbare like the waning influence of the all but forgotten Celtic tradition (Conway, 78). Yeats picks up the selfsame color again with Angus' servant, a faithful Christian lad in a "blue cap of the Irish peasantry in the seventeenth century, and had about his neck a rosary of blue beads" (119). The accents of the ancient bardic order upon a Christian emblem, the beads strung about the boy's neck, impart some remnant of pagan nobility upon the current Irishman, suggesting he still has some inherent quality of ancestral Druidic majesty upon which he may act. Angus' young servant does so accordingly. The boy assists his master faithfully, though fearfully considering the old gods and pagan spirits Angus conjures, therein dreading the spiritual manifestations of his own ancestral nobility. Likewise, the boy doubts Angus' ultimate reconciliation with a universal pagan spirit to which he himself neither appreciates nor subscribes. Aodh's realm of myth incarnate has faded to phantoms; as such, Angus pursues a spirit without gnosis, and thus without the ability to accurately translate the true nature of the spiritual reward he seeks. Angus lusts for eternal life; he develops his powers of wizardry and adopts the life of Druidry as the necessary means to accomplish his goal. He reposes in an abandoned monastery overrun

by lilies and roses, shaded in the depths of an oak and "hazel-covered isle" (119). In essence, Angus resides amidst a spiritual grove, where orthodoxy and mystical nature converge, attracting mythical creatures of Celtic pagantry to gather at evening and frolic about the enchanted scene. Lending to the mystical mood of the natural setting are the specific trees in Yeats' citation. Both the oak and the hazel are among the Druid collection of sacred trees—the oak and its acorn representing "the highest form of fertility, the creativity of the mind;" the hazel symbolizing poetic wisdom, art, and magical divination (Pepper, 15, 19). Via these specific Druidic references, Yeats ensconces Angus within an environment that portrays both the Anima via the oak and its creative manifestations via the hazel. Therein Angus is enveloped by collective forms of Druidic magic and myth manifested in an environment which, unlike orthodox society, can support his wizardry. Angus lives in mystical isolation from the encroaching orthodoxy of his era: he forsakes modern religion to honor the Goddess of antiquity from the depths of her Earthen womb. During his stay in the woods, he cultivates his magical powers, wielded by a rod of quicken-wood or rowan: a mighty tool of Druid lore used to command the spirits of the Shue (Pepper, 5). Via subliminal Druidic references, Yeats illustrates Angus as the archetypal Druid wizard; Angus has modeled himself as such, recreating a Druid environment to the best of his ability from which to invoke the great secret of Celtic yore. Although Angus' environment is decidedly less genuine than Aodh's living myth, it is nonetheless effective eliciting the secret to Angus' eternal life, for the wizard is informed by his pagan sprites of the exact moment he may achieve perpetual youth. According to Angus' informants, after the sun's passing through the Ram, but prior to its approach of the Lion,

...a little before the close of the first hour after dawn, I shall find the moment, and then I will go away to a southern land and build myself a palace of white marble amid orange trees, and gather the leave and brave

and the beautiful about me, and enter into the eternal kingdom of my youth. (122)

Angus' eternal moment for which he labors in preparation to receive, though somewhat cryptically detailed by the astrological houses of the Ram and the Lion (Aries and Leo respectively), is not simply Yeats' "appropriately elaborate way of saying 'in Spring'" as critics care to suggest (Watson, 249). Yeats cites a specific span of time between the start of Aries on March 21 and that of Leo on July 24: a period that encompasses both the spring in its entirety and the first third of the summer season (Pepper, 52-3). Yeats' description does not focus exclusively upon the spring by fictitiously exaggerating its length; if so, this would be quite the sloppy oversight for such a symbolically precise author as he. Rather, when examined from a Druidic perspective born of Celtic myth instead of common astrology, Angus' moment becomes far more clearly defined and sensibly related to collection's mythical pattern overall. The midway point between the two aforementioned astrological houses marks the Druidic sabbat of Beltaine, celebrating the carnal union of the fertile Goddess and the verile God. This idea works well as the suitable time for Angus to achieve his spiritual unity with the eternal entity he desires. Accordingly, his heralded moment strikes upon the hour of the Goddess—the dawn itself, wherein the sacrifice is demanded to complete the Celtic cycle and achieve unity between the protagonist-God and the spirit-Goddess. Unlike Aodh, the ideal bard and male principle who in complete gnosis acknowledges and thus willingly yields his sacrifice to the queen hence completing the cycle of unity, Angus' motivation is a selfish desire for youth which obscures his vision. Angus for all his potent wizardry lacks true gnosis, thus he like his orthodox servant misinterprets the eternal gift of the Goddess, expecting a carnal rejuvenation. Indeed Angus will receive his youth, he will gather with the brave and the beautiful, but upon an immaterial level of existence he never considers. Angus prepares the inner sanctum of his pagan monastery with roses and hazel boughs, fabricating an indoor grove or Mother womb of sorts; he yields his life upon the



Goddess' hour, yet the reader like the servant is excluded from Angus' transition to spirit. Denied witness of the wizard's passing, readers and the boy alike observe only the cold corpse left behind. According to the sacrificial demand of the Druidic cycle, Angus has satisfied his duty and therein receives eternal unity: an assumption supported by Angus' blue robe now covered in pollen as a paganistic baptism, suggesting the bard's unification with the natural spirit, celebrated by the song of the spring thrush who appears in the window thus drawing the story to a close. Angus' sacrifice, however complete, sharply contrasts that of Aodh who acts in complete cognizance of his responsibility to the spirit. Hence the heroism of the Celtic protagonist acutely wanes despite his sacrificial death as Yeats progresses The Secret Rose collection from Samhain to Beltaine, and likewise from antiquity to orthodoxy.

Juxtaposing individual stories is not the only way Yeats maintains the symbolic and mythic congruity of the Celtic year within The Secret Rose, although the binary relationship between "The Binding of the Hair" and "The Heart of the Spring" is most explicitly defined. The two tales contrast both thematically, where Aodh's Gnostic sacrifice runs contrary to Angus' ignorant one, and symbolically with their Samhain and Beltaine references respectively. One may also note that Yeats organizes the two tales six stories apart within The Secret Rose, reflecting the exact number of months that separate Samhain from Beltaine in the course of the year. Although to suggest this chronological pattern as intentional rather than incidental may be a bit too enthusiastic a reading, the congruency itself does exist, lending more mystique to Yeats' symbolic network of Druidic pattern and theme. Another complementary design symbolically juxtaposing Samhain and Beltaine emerges not between two other tales in The Secret Rose, but rather implicitly within the single story "The Curse of Hanrahan the Red." Yeats inverts the binary formula formerly composed by two individual tales into one self-contained story, therein contrasting the prior binary pattern of sabbats with the latter. The entire Hanrahan collection itself revolves cyclically around the Beltaine season, punctuated with the

mention of May eve and St. John's eve--colloquialisms for the Druid spring fertility festival itself, and actual illustrations of "the serpent dance, the dance made by the wise Druids" routinely performed on every sabbat (148). Where the recurring season of Beltaine creates a cyclical pattern of mythical reference, a single symbol centers it, acting as a counterbalance to the thematic context of the spring sabbat. During yet another St. John's eve of Hanrahan's mature years, the poet lays a curse upon several unfortunate subjects, not withstanding an old yew tree, traditionally associated with age--the bane of Hanrahan's mortality. When considered in Druidic context, the thematic relevance of the yew as a target of Hanrahan's curse gains far greater depth:

The yew--*Ioho* in Irish--is the tree of death and rebirth, a sacred tree of the Druids. On mainland Britain the oak was the central tree of Druidry, but in Ireland it was the yew...in the popular imagination it is a tree of death--partly, perhaps, because its leaves are poisonous, but mainly because it grows in churchyards...The esoteric explanation is that this represents the survival of a pagan knowledge that the Yew was the tree of rebirth and eternal life, and therefore that it was most fitting as a graveyard tree. In the Druid tree-calendar, *Ioho* is placed at the time of Samhuinn. Samhuinn is the time of death and rebirth of the Celtic year, in the three days between 31 October and 2 November. At this time we honour the Ancestors, the Departed Ones, and prepare for a new cycle of the year. (Carr-Gomm, 13)

The yew tree representative of Samhain becomes the central, fixed, and eternal symbolic figure around which the Hanrahan collection's annual cycle, Beltaine references, and thematic context mutually revolve, creating an internal binary system within both "The Curse of Hanrahan the Red" independently, and its five companion pieces as a unified literary piece. Therein Yeats preserves the Celtic mythical cycles fully intact, illustrated in multi-layered patterns of thematic conformity. Carr-Gomm's commentary reveals the vast

difference between traditional and Druidic interpretations of the single yew tree symbol, meriting far greater literary meaning when one employs the latter to The Secret Rose tales, and the Hanrahan collection particularly, considering his bardic command and its misdirection against the very spiritual source that nurtures it.

Yeats' bardic order, traced in its decline from Celtic antiquity through the eighteenth century bears greatly upon his concept of the artistic ideal and its achievement. The bard's role in Druid society was greatly esteemed; versed composed of bardic skill were more than mere entertainment or the demonstration of creative versatility. Rather, the bard as historian, poet, and musician of the Celtic tribe constructed his verses with the gravity and potency of both ancestral and political law. Such as the Celt's tradition was oral, their national history and immortal Tuathan origin were preserved in the bard's didactic song (Conway, 77-8). The bard's powers of articulation coupled with his ancient knowledge shaped his formidable presence of mystery and power throughout Celtic history, paving the poet's noble status, one both respected and feared, which extended into Yeats' own era:

Bardic power, though it appears comically in the bard's supposed ability to rhyme rats to death, was usually no laughing matter. In the *Tain Bo Cualnge*, fear of their satire drove Ferdiad to fight his blood brother Cuchulain; and a sixteenth century treaty weighed satire by the poets and excommunication by the Church as equivalent sanctions. Yeats himself termed the bards 'the most powerful influence in the land... Their rule was one of fear as much as love. A poem and an incantation were almost the same. A satire could fill a whole countryside with famine.' As he noted in the same context, that fear survived in his own day among the country people. (Marcus, 9-10)

The Druidic tradition of a heroic bardic order establishes a power and presence of epic proportions, transcending myth to influence organized society throughout Yeats' own

time. The bard as the artistic visionary has both privilege to that esoteric knowledge which is the Rose, Goddess, or Anima, plus the ability to draw upon that wisdom and articulate it into an organic manifestation of power. Thus the spoken word as a cause issues effects upon the material plane, with those resultant effects manifesting either constructively or destructively according to the bard's particular fancy. This is the power of the artistic, wielded with diverse motives, meriting mixed social responses, and resulting in varied ends for the bards of The Secret Rose. Aodh as the primary example of the bardic ideal, the Druid and God himself, shapes his verses to worship his Goddesses incarnate and national. Dectira's troops rally at Aodh's inspiring tales of ancestral victory, while the queen herself enjoys his love songs composed in her honor. In either case, Aodh's rhymes are directed toward noble ends. The Gleeman's verses in comparison strike the fear and bait the ire of his orthodox hosts. "The Crucifixion of the Outcast" borrows for its blueprint a specific Celtic myth wedged within the Tuatha-Fir Bolg colonization dispute:

Bress [son of the Fir Bolg king Eochaid] was as stingy with his hospitality as he was with his promises, a practice frowned upon by the Tuatha. When the chief Tuathan bard Cairpre, son of Ogma, visited him, he was treated rudely and given terrible food and quarters. As Cairpre left, he laid a magic satire on Bress. (Conway, 92)

Yeats' Gleeman figures in association with the Celtic Cairpre, a legendary bard and son of Ogma, Druid author of the Olgam tree alphabet. Like Cairpre, the mystical power of versification courses through the Gleeman's ancestral blood, whose "birth-place was the Field of Gold; but his eating and sleeping places were the four providences of Eri, and his abiding place was not upon the ridge of the earth" (99). The Gleeman is a bard of noble birth and majestic prowess; his home spans the length of Ireland itself, his allegiance lies with the pagan gods whose "red wind of the Druids"—the passion of blood and battle—fuels his verses (99). As a powerful Celtic conglomerate, the Gleeman possesses

Gnosis—a spiritual vision complementing his poetic command, which intuitively forewarns him of his own demise as he peers along a row of crucifixes erected to punish social disturbances such as he. The Gleeman's curse, carrying all the weight of Druidic ancestry, arises from the ill treatment he receives at the hands of an uncharitable monastic order. Similar to Cairpre, Yeats' Outcast dwells in doleful accommodations, replete with moldy bread, soured drinking water, a rancid bath, and a flea-infested blanket upon which to sleep. To further his insult, the monks as yet unprovoked by the Gleeman's curse imprison him within the inhospitable lodging, which is niggardly in comparison to the comfort and luxury within which the "gracious Coarb, who orders all things concerning the lodgings of travelers" reposes (101). The Gleeman's justifiable outrage concerning his unwarranted ill-treatment, and his resultant curse leveled upon the Coarb conversely prove insult enough to warrant his death as both a social and religious disturbance to the bourgeois order of monastic orthodoxy. The Coarb as the mouthpiece of this bourgeois construct states the ignominious position to which noble Druidic tradition and its bardic order have been disenfranchised:

Brother, the bards and the gleeman are an evil race, ever cursing and ever stirring up the people, and immoral and immoderate in all things, and heathen in their heats, always longing after the son of Lir, and Angus, and Bridget, and the Dagda, and Dana the Mother, and all the false gods of the old days; always making poems in praise of those kings and queens of the demons...and railing against God and Christ and the blessed Saints...If we do not make an end of him another will, for who can eat and sleep in peace while men like him are going about the world? (102)

Such as the gods of an old religion become the demons of the new, orthodoxy blasphemes both the Celtic gods and the bardic tradition of antiquity, for these concepts are a threat to the bourgeois religious order. Hence any man wielding the powers of pagan antiquity, like the Gleeman whose allegiance resides among the Druid deities of

yore, becomes the bane of orthodoxy and a disruption of the social order predicated upon it. The Gleeman by his very identification as a bard warrants death from the Coarb, whose name and hence position of authority would wither should he show mercy or the slightest graciousness toward the pagan outcast. Thus the Coarb as the head of the monastic order demonstrates neither charity nor grace, supposed principles of an orthodoxy he assumes to his convenience, but authoritarianism alone. With the profile of the Coarb, Yeats illustrates the corruption of orthodoxy set against those nobler pagan beliefs now eclipsed, despised, and defeated by a new religious totality. Where Aodh's bardic cunning earns his esteemed place among royalty, the Gleeman's verbal prowess earns his disgrace and resultant persecution. Thus the creative power of the bard displaces under an abusive social and religious authority, leaving the noble Celt without an environment to support his vital role: defending and honoring the universal spirit as the God. It is never the potency of the creative spirit that wanes, but orthodox society's ability and desire to endorse it. Hence with the Gleeman's crucifixion, man severs his own direct spiritual connection with the Anima leaving the modern poet wandering in fruitless misdirection, his gnosis obscured, and creative vision unrealized.

Yeats aptly develops this premise of the bard's spiritual castration within the Hanrahan collection. Hanrahan's Gnostic impotence demonstrated in the first tale, "The Book of the Great Dhoul and Hanrahan the Red," results from his socialized orthodoxy and resultant fear of its demons, the Celtic Gods:

Presently a puff of wind swept round the corner of a house, and sent a whirl of straws dancing and leaping before [Hanrahan's] feet, and made him stop and cross himself in momentary fear, for such winds are held to be the passing of a troop of the Shee. (138)

Hanrahan's peasant superstition, which figures a passing wind as the presence of the heathen Celtic gods, inadvertently proves an instrument of orthodoxy. In fear and for the sake of his own protection, Hanrahan traces the sign of the cross upon himself--an

action that fortifies his subscription to orthodoxy, and further distances his poetic vision from its pagan source. As Yeats' last of the bardic order, Hanrahan has fallen far from the likes of Aodh and his noble ancestry. Hanrahan is not merely a peasant scholar but a licentious drunkard, whose rhymes of Gaelic lore seduce women at the cost of his pedagogical position within society. Hanrahan's lusts and his ill-use of the bardic tradition to sate his carnal desires is nothing short of a disgrace to that noble heritage from which his art stems. Both Hanrahan's orthodoxy plus his abuse of artistic power conflict against his bardic potential; as an eighteenth century social construct, the poet has assimilated his orthodox environment, thereby becoming a poor vessel for pagan spiritual articulation. The once external conflict between society and the Gnostic individual, as seen in "The Crucifixion of the Outcast," has now progressed into an internalized dynamic manifested in the modern bard unaware of his own spiritual dilemma. Hence when Hanrahan invokes a spiritual manifestation--his Goddess and Rose as Cleena--his lack of gnosis feeds the poet's disrespect toward his own muse. Hanrahan is at once drawn to the ideal beauty of Cleena's presence, and the music of her words as he recalls her appearance night after night. Yet the peasant scholar ironically disregards the honor of her presence and the wisdom of her dialogue, which espouses the universal essence he seeks, as mere trivia:

The next evening at twilight...Cleena was even more visible and audible, and [Hanrahan] listened to many miraculous things concerning the meaning of the notes and how they rose beyond the highest ramparts of heaven, and sank more low than the desolate land where Orchil drives the iron-horned and iron-hoofed deer; and all the while Owen was greatly perturbed at having put so great a lady to so great a trouble, for a thing that mattered to no man. (142)

While Cleena's song deeply moves Owen Hanrahan's artistic spirit, her pagan wisdom falls upon ears deafened by orthodoxy. Yeats overtly links Cleena with Druidic references of antiquity, both identifying and ennobling her along a Celtic mythical

construct that Owen as the orthodox, anti-spiritual social biproduct can neither recognize nor aptly defend. Hanrahan, a dichotomy in his own right due to his internalized spiritual-artistic conflict, is the fallen bardic prodigy: his socialization fractures his gnosis, his pursuit of sexual and alcoholic inebriation sours his nobility, while his reputation as a bard in and of itself earns his disesteem from the orthodox clergy. Wherein the wizard Angus fashions an environment to support, encourage, and nurture him, Hanrahan, the discrepant product of contrary influences, has no such option. The material luxuries that engross Hanrahan's appetites contest the spiritual ideal of Cleena which engages his curiosity and speaks to his artistic soul. It is the "fierce and passionate...good and bad" complementary binaries of Hanrahan's bardic spirit that Cleena loves (143), reflecting the dichotomy of her song, at once celestial and tragically sorrowful; her kindred Shee who, as "those who can neither sin nor obey," exist beyond the orthodox codes of moral behavior (162); and Yeats' own creative ideal, his universal Rose "of love and hate" (81). However, it is Hanrahan's orthodox myopism to which Cleena cannot sensibly appeal with esoteric wisdom, mortal form, or incensed curse:

[Cleena] turned toward [Hanrahan] with a face so full of the red mortal blood that he did not recognize the immortal of his dreams; and she said to him in a caressing voice: 'You have always loved me better than your own soul, and you have sought for me everywhere and in everything, though without knowing what you sought, and now I have come to you and taken on mortality that I may share your sorrow.' He saw that she was indeed Cleena of the Wave, but so changed that all the trouble he had ever had from women, and all his anger against them were between him and her...and he flung her from him, crying: 'It was not you I loved, but the woman of the Shee.' (143)

Hanrahan's ostensible lack of gnosis, his obscured creative vision lends to his cruel rejection of Cleena. Although Cleena suffers Hanrahan's rough indignity, his blasphemy



truly blights himself alone. For Cleena in the spiritual form of the Celtic Shee is Owen's muse and Yeats' Anima; she is the Druidic eternal Goddess, the creative universal source of man's poetic vision. The traditional Druid bard, as possessor of that artistic vision and wielder of the word so as to manifest creative spirit unto a material plane, understands, respects, and honors his articulation as a skill dependent upon the Anima it draws forth. He is cognizant of the vital link between the Celtic spirit and the efficacy of his own verses; this knowledge in itself is part and parcel of the visionary's gnosis, which celebrates its own source, order, and spiritual law. Hanrahan, disowned of this gnosis via his socialization, cannot articulate what he cannot discern; he is left impotent. Thus his artistic yearning cannot manifest in material form via his own initiative. Cleena, for the love of Hanrahan's unmanifested but inherent artistic potential realizes his longing for him; yet again, when confronted with the Rose he seeks, the myopic bard misinterprets and thus spurns her. This tragic condition of the agnostic modern poet is far more than the simple rejection of the moral in lieu of the unattainable ideal critics suggest. Even G. J. Watson, a more liberal critic, dismisses Hanrahan's motive to reject the carnate Cleena as "the true poet's yearning for the ideal...constantly aware of the chasm between the limitless aspiration of the imagination and the poverty of the flesh" (Watson, xxxvi-ii). Watson's supposition, while neatly woven of Bloom's anti-material, pro-libertine "Gnostic" fabric, simply does not fit the context of Cleena's materialization. For Cleena bestows upon Hanrahan a gift his own fragmented vision cannot distinguish nor his verses create. Cleena, once Hanrahan's muse in spiritual form, articulates herself into the material: the muse becomes art. Spinning Anima into sensory form is the providence of the artist, a providence Hanrahan has not achieved. In spurning the carnal Cleena, Hanrahan defames the tradition, role, and artistic products of the bard. Hence Cleena's curse upon him is the articulation of the fixed and impotent position Hanrahan himself has authored:

'I [Cleena of the Wave] lay upon you a curse, and you shall see the Rose everywhere, in the noggin, in woman's eye, in drifting phantoms, and seek to come to it in

vain; it shall waken a fire in your heart, and in your feet, and in your hands. A sorrow of all sorrows is upon you, Owen Hanrahan the Red.' ( 144)

With Cleena's curse, Yeats clearly illustrates the poetic dilemma Hanrahan, he, and all poets are doomed to suffer. What was once the Gnostic power of the artistic is now the agnostic curse of the poet: the power of articulation without the ability to manifest its own source. Hence the vision is clouded, the verses evince a hollow beauty without magic, and the poet's indeterminate artistic longing grows with a spiritual famine that cannot possibly be sated in the orthodox construct which is his world. Yet for Hanrahan the agnostic libertine, Cleena's curse is more a blessing, for it sharpens his artistic drive. Hanrahan the bard, inextricable from his social construct, embodies Yeats' war of the spiritual and natural orders as a dialogue of his internalized conflict. This is Owen's predicament prior to Cleena's invasion, and it remains his affliction unto death. However, Cleena's curse once issued sensitizes Hanrahan to his own creative hunger which sex and drink had previously dulled, now forcing the bard to embrace his own tradition. Bereft of home and property, Hanrahan takes to the woods, the Goddess' earthen womb and an artistically restorative habitat. Between the manifestation of Cleena's curse and Hanrahan's woodland journeying, the poet's artistic potential finally actualizes. Where Hanrahan's senses were once numbed with drink or preoccupied with lusts are now heightened to perceive Cleena's mystical presence all about his natural surroundings, as the muse paints itself across the landscape, engaging his poetic imagination:

[Hanrahan's] favourite business was to sit looking into the long narrow lake which cherishes the gaunt image of the Rock of the Bogs, and to wander in a little wood of larch and hazel and ash upon its borders... Sometimes he would hear in the little wood a fitful music which was forgotten like a dream the moment it had ceased... while at sundown and at moonrise the lake grew like a gateway of ivory and silver, and from

its silence arose great lamentations, a vague shimmering laughter, and many pale and beckoning hands. (165)

Having abandoned his formerly licentious lifestyle and embracing the woods in its stead, Hanrahan develops a keen sensitivity to the presence of his muse, an entity that animates every minute detail of the common forest terrain, and aggrandizes it into a magnificent vision of spiritual splendor. Even Hanrahan's small plot of land expands into a heavenly paradise of wondrous magnitude. This is the perception of the Romantic artist who finds eternity in the temporal, spirit in the material, and splendor in the mundane. As Hanrahan's vision clarifies, his verses strengthen with the emotional depth and dexterity of a true bard. Likewise, he crafts his rhymes toward nobler ends than was his former custom, bringing a peasant grove to tears with lyrics coupling a nationalist theme with a poignant sense of loss:

O tufted reeds, bend low and low in pools on the Green Land,  
Under the bitter Black Winds blowing out of the left hand!  
Like tufted reeds our courage droops in a Black Wind and dies:  
But we have hidden in our hearts the flame out of the eyes  
Of Kathleen the Daughter of Hoolihan...  
O heavy swollen waters, brim the Fall of the Oak trees,  
For the Grey Winds are blowing up, out of the clinging seas!  
Like heavy swollen waters are our bodies and our blood:  
But purer than a tall candle before the Blessed Rood  
Is Kathleen the Daughter of Hoolihan. (153)

Hanrahan's ballad weaves a metaphorical tale forecasting the end of an era; heavily punctuated with Druidic corresponding colors, elements, and sacred trees, Yeats evokes the fall of a noble Gaelic era and its people: gods, heroes, and bards alike, now reduced to the phantoms, demons, and persons of ill-repute. As society dismantles its own spiritual tradition, it destroys the very soul of the nation which has naught but the winds of death,

passion, and a severed spirituality to recall Ireland to the legacy it abandoned. Hanrahan's verses potently evoke the sense of sacredness lost, elusive and unattainable to the agnostic poet in an orthodox society. Indeed Hanrahan's vision has elevated to an artistic degree that far transcends his pragmatic contemporaries: those absorbed, bound, and sated by the soulless, passionless, insubstantial concerns of the modern world. However, that acute artistic vision is earned and practiced at a tragic price, for it opens one's eyes to the poet's own agnosis. He sees the evidence of a greater spirituality no longer his to command. It manifests itself all about his perceptible and preternatural environment but not in his own verses, which although beautiful in an aesthetic sense and moving in an emotional manner lack the raw spiritual power or magic to make manifest their theme. The modern poet's rhymes, no longer an organic entity, cannot create via their composition; they do not evoke, no longer the cause of a material effect. The poem is limited exclusively as the expression of an idea, emotion, or theme; it poignantly articulates the doleful condition of its own fixed spiritual impotence, completely unable to disengage and thus empower itself. The verses are a mere reflection of its subject, two-dimensional, insubstantial, hollow. Therefore the poet's art is not a satisfactory means to supplicate the Goddess; they do not manifest an action of honor or sacrifice to perpetuate the eternal cycle of life. Hence the modern poet is no longer able to placate the demands of creative unity since he can no longer manipulate it into being: thus remains the tragic condition of Yeats' post-Hanrahan protagonists unto his own era. Hanrahan as the last of the bardic order still manifests the power of the artistic once he develops it, insofar as he exacts a curse upon mortal age. The irony of an agnostic bard's curse, however, is not unlike a child playing with fire: wielding a force one cannot comprehend only harms the individual; therein Hanrahan's curse inappropriately aimed at a sacred target lands squarely upon his own head. When Hanrahan curses the yew, which in his traditionally orthodox mind is a malignant and painful reminder of decrepitude, he inadvertently blasphemes death--the necessary sacrifice honoring the Goddess, his muse. Simply stated, Owen uses spiritual power to blight both

it and himself as its agent. Therein the yew tree assists Hanrahan's violent injury and resultant death; the yew, a truly noble emblem of spiritual sacrifice and rebirth into unity, facilitates the bard's death--the God's sacrificial responsibility of which Owen is incognizant, and furthermore resents. Yet when the visionary moment arrives revealing the divine passion of the Rose, Hanrahan graciously yields, completing the Celtic spiritual cycle, earning grace from the guise of the material:

About midnight, and in a moment, the walls seemed to melt away and to leave [Hanrahan's] bed floating in a misty and pale light, which glimmered on each side to an incalculable distance... 'I am dead,' he repeated, 'and in the midst of the music of heaven. O Cherubim and Serphim, receive my soul!'... At first he could see nothing, for it was as dark as though he were enclosed in black marble; but gradually the firelight began to glimmer upon Whinny Byrne, who was bending over it. She got up and came towards him... and then faint white arms, wrought as of glistening cloud, came out of the mud- stiffened tatters and were clasped about his body, and a voice that sounded faint and far, but was of a marvelous distinctness, whispered in his ears: 'You will seek me no longer upon the breasts of women.'

(169)

With Cleena's enunciation, the curse of the artist is lifted; amidst her embrace the bard unites with his muse, becoming the Anima he could never define. Hanrahan's death denotes the final tribute given to the Rose and the last of bardic power, leaving in its wake the artistic yearning, vacant soul, and poetic blindness of spiritual dissolution.

#### IV.

### *Invoking the Darkness: Concluding in Apocalypse*

With the chapter of bardic power closed upon Hanrahan's death, the last promise of sacrificial unity retracts to the dim shadows of obscurity, stranding mankind within his spiritually void material environment. The inadequacies of the feathered King's social sphere for example, one that marginally tolerates his appropriation in "The Wisdom of the King," are exacerbated by orthodoxy's advancement and material progression to no longer account for Gnostic vision. Like Cleena's phantasmal exchange with Hanrahan, the Rose is not perceived a privileged, esteemed wisdom of the gods for whom society will bend to accommodate, but rather as the impious, fevered imaginings "who dwell in the minds of the crazy, and the diseased, and the dying" (170). Those left to embrace the Rose are the pathetic outcasts of society, such as the distempered hag Whinny Byrne from whose grace even Hanrahan, the final bard and demonstrated God aspect, shrinks in horror and disdain. Orthodoxy by invention cannot breed a valid candidate to honor the Goddess--she is dismissed, replaced by modern religious icons who require no such mortal sacrifices. Thus sacrifice as a spiritual and artistic necessity presents no visceral demands upon the bourgeoisie, eclipsing its attention and meriting its blatant disregard. Sacrifice is no longer a prerequisite of the God incarnate to perform but a non-issue, an inarticulate phantom plaguing the effete poet with the enigma of his own agnosis. Hence the visionary like his esoteric vision is displaced, eclipsed, stumbling blindly in spiritual vacancy, his muse a mere shadow dwelling amidst the darkness. The poet's socialized position of isolated immobility exists in perfect opposition to the ancient Druid bard of Gnostic clarity and active prose, therein completing Yeats' cycle of civilization--a theme commonly exercised within his creative work. Yeats in his ability to trace cycles encompassing, defining, and maintaining every construct of the overall spiritual-natural-material system aligns The

Secret Rose's theme tracing society's spiritual decline with Druidry's own cyclical design of birth, aging, death, and reincarnation. Critic Morton Seiden defines Yeats' cycle of civilization as "an age [which] is ushered into being by a supernatural influx; it perishes in cataclysm; it achieves heroism and Unity of Culture when human life converges upon Anima Mundi; and it is superseded by its cultural opposite" (Seiden, 56). The Secret Rose opens with the complete spiritual ideal intact, illustrated by "The Binding of the Hair," integrating a thematic triad of the deities incarnate, the God/dess equation, and the Celtic mythical cycle of Samhain. Furthermore with the story's precise adherence to Druidic etiological myth, it accounts for the Druidic summary of man's origin: the divine influx manifesting in material form or nature, which retains its spiritual divinity and preserves its integral unity via the honorary sacrifice. Aodh as the collection's primary protagonist and exemplary ideal illustrates the archetypal hero, God, bard, visionary, and artistic supplicant. Meanwhile, his environment is the material expression of spiritual law that allows, articulates, and honors the Rose--the elusive Anima of Yeats' and every poet's pursuit. Thus "The Binding of the Hair" establishes the consummate setting supporting artistic vision to stand in stark contrast with each ensuing tale that progressively marginalizes the protagonist-God, the bard-poet, and society as a whole from their true spiritual heredity. With Yeats' latter tales, Druidry's cultural opposite, orthodoxy, reigns supreme, resulting in an era of increasing ignorance, spiritual neglect, and artistic distemper. Clearly, the sacrifice is abandoned utterly; protagonists from "The Rose of Shadow" throughout the fin de siecle Triptych court the Rose out of selfish motivation. However, the lack of Yeats' spiritual and sacrificial acknowledgements on the part of agnostic protagonists, be they tragically anti-heroic and inherently blaspheming, spurs the Rose in only a temporal sense. For Yeats' cultural cycle of spiritual displacement via society's orthodox and material evolution is not linear by definition: society can only neglect the Rose for so long, denying its own role in the spiritual order upon which the continuity of life depends. Without a sacrifice, the cycle of life cannot progress but merely

deteriorates into a state of utter disfunction. Just as Hanrahan blights himself in denying Cleena, modern orthodox society for all its religious morals, ethics, and icons destroys itself in denying the spiritual law of an Old Gnostic construct. The Druidic philosophy of a perfectly balanced, wholly integrated unity may be ignored, even blasphemed, but as a universal it cannot be denied. Ultimately, The Secret Rose protagonists of Yeats' modern era abuse and neglect the Rose to their own peril: Oona Herne authors the death of her family in "The Rose of Shadow," using an old curse of Hanrahan which she as a socialized orthodox figure lacks the power to direct—the Rose becomes her scourge. The narrator of "Rosa Alchemica" refuses his commitment to the Goddess upon the critical moment of personal sacrifice. Distraught with the notion of spiritual unity gained at the loss of his independent identity, the narrator collapses in horror of an indefinite existence. Instead he seeks shelter in the comfort of a religious facade, orthodoxy itself, which temporarily stills the constant lamentations of a spiritual existence he rudely disavows. In every story, the Rose whether benevolent or malevolent is the sole force of perfect constancy. Its presence upon a material plane remains powerfully evident, wild, and unyielding to those who seek to dispel it. While society may not account for gnostic spirituality in its vocabulary, this lack of articulation does not serve to vanquish the Rose but merely exacerbates its sacrificial need in deliberate silence. Man in his orthodoxy may discredit the Rose or discount it as he will anything without place or purpose in modern society. However man, while ignorantly negating his integral role within the Druidic God/dess universal construct, cannot extract himself from that spiritual law via his simple denial of its existence. Man is temporal; his social constructs are temporal as well. Sacrifice yielded or selfishness maintained, man both independently and collectively remains an aspect of the God: he who ages, suffers, and dies prescribed by Druidic theosophy. Only his muse as the Rose, the Anima, the indefinite omnipresence beyond man's meager definitions of verifiable existence, remains eternal as the Goddess. Therefore she in her permanence is more real than man's fleeting orthodoxical world to which he subscribes at



the conclusion of The Secret Rose. Thus Yeats' overall scheme of society's spiritual disenfranchisement, severance, and ultimate decrepitude in sum follows Druidry's life cycle of birth, age, and death in congruence with the God who follows this order. Furthermore, as an established cyclical pattern, Yeats' historical theme of society's spiritual-artistic decline must account for its own reconciliation so as to uphold the progression of the cycle itself. Yeats does so following the traditional Druidic pattern of complete contextual integration, challenging the popular critical notion that The Secret Rose leaves the reader like Yeats and his protagonists hopelessly oscillating between two incompatible realms. Those traditional critics ensconced in rigid explications naively see no further that the illusory irresolution between a spirit and nature of orthodox definitions. Critic Vicki Mahaffrey demonstrates this error with her summation that these two elements set in opposition "leave the reader with two equally unacceptable choices between spiritual wilderness and domestic discipline" (Mahaffrey, 123). Her proposal in its gross oversimplification never reasons that such an irresolution disrupts and thus ceases the cyclical pattern of thematic, historic, and esoteric congruity: a systematic collapse that Yeats as a master of thematic consonance would never allow, especially by the use of orthodox definitions to which he never subscribes. Rather, Yeats sustains The Secret Rose's cyclical continuity from the onset by adhering to the precise Druidic system that accounts for its own perpetuity with the God/dess construct. Due to the Goddess' permanence, the Rose's spiritual totality and therein her greater reality than the material society that refuses her, it is ultimately within her power to reestablish the universal balance that man, the visionless and artistically impotent product of society, upsets. This inherent power, Yeats' solution to man's internalized war of his spiritual against natural order, is the apocalyptic manifestation of the Rose. The Rose itself, symbolic of esoteric, artistic, and nationalistic ideals, conveys the raw and fearsome cosmic backlash against society, which attempts to deny a force far greater than its own petty self-interests, upsetting universal balance and cyclical progression in its defiance of spiritual law. Yeats'

apocalypse denotes far more than the end of an era's antiquity and true artistic vision as each progressive generation loses more of its gnosis, bardic power, and heroic authenticity. Rather, a universal cataclysm purged upon a material plane is necessary to reestablish cosmic harmony as the singular means to vanquish, assimilate, and rebirth mankind into the true, ideal spirituality he can no longer access. Yeats, pretersensitive to the spiritual trauma of the agnostic poet, courts his apocalyptic Rose into action with his poetic preamble to The Secret Rose collection:

*Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,  
Enfold me...I too await  
The hour of thy great wind of love and hate.  
When shall the stars be blown about the sky,  
Like the sparks blown out of a smithy, and die?  
surely thine hour has come, thy great wind blows,  
Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose? (81)*

Yeats' prefatory poem "To the Secret Rose" engages the awesome influx of divine power unto his material environment, a power of such incomprehensible magnitude to engulf, digest, and reissue collective man into the nurturing existence of Old Gnosis. Both the poem and its apocalyptic emblem the Rose draw upon Druidic concepts of cyclical life and Druidry's definition of esoteric power. When considering the structural cohesion of the poem, one finds the first line repeated ad verbatim to serve as the poem's final thought, establishing a sense of cyclical completion that encases a series of Gnostic visionaries and true protagonists who nobly promulgate the continuance of the cycle by their heroic examples of personal sacrifice. Therein the structural pattern of the poem like that of The Secret Rose collection overall maintains the congruity of Druidry's God/dess formula. Furthermore the once beatific, then horrific Rose follows an Old Gnostic analogue of pure divine power. Contrary to orthodox definitions of some almighty judicial force, one of moral reward or punishment manifested as either salvation in heaven or

damnation in hell, Druidry heralds a unified force independent of moral prescriptions containing and thus reconciling all conceptual oppositions into a single totality. Within Yeats' Anima, one created along an Old Gnostic theosophy, "there is only creative and passive, positive and negative, male and female. The created universe is the result of the harmonious union of these two perfect opposites, which are nevertheless equal in strength and perfection... Good and evil [by contrast] are concepts of man's inferior intellect" (Gonzalez-Whippler, 29). Yeats' Rose like Druidic theosophical divinity contains, defines, and thus accounts for all dichotomous interrelationships as structurally coherent adjuncts of itself. The Rose is both love and hate, life and death, youth and age, spirit and nature, light and dark. Neither goodness nor reward is suggested by its beauty or benevolence; malignancy and catastrophe are neither an evil manifestation or a sentence of damnation. Rather each aspect's inversion is the dichotomous reflection of its own counterbalance. The God and Satan of orthodoxy are simply the trite products of man's religious conscience, frightened by an omnipresence his agnosis cannot define. Trapped within the obtuse construct of his own orthodoxy, man is unable to correct his own lapse of vision; he cannot restore the spiritual connection severed by his own hand nor reestablish a social environment supportive of a magic, mystery, and myth that stems beyond the verses of his pen and the cunning of his imagination. In essence, the poet is unable to restore the magical powers he abandoned to orthodoxy, ever bearing the burden of a bardic tradition void of its articulated vision. Consequentially his spiritual famine burns upon his artistic conscience, while his creative pulse quickens for an elusive muse he cannot reclaim. He is the failed god, anti-hero, and poetic foil of his own cunning, tragically unable to author his own corrective. The divine force of eternal unity then is left to right itself. The apocalyptic Rose, like Cleena of the Wave before Hanrahan, shall materially manifest itself to claim the sacrifice from man which is rightfully hers. Therein Yeats reconciles his own thematic conflict, again maintaining the Druidic cycle between Goddess or Rose and God or social man. True to Yeats' historical cycle, man has

reverted from an age of spiritual potency to one of agnostic enfeeblement. Such is the natural progression of society, once Aodh in his heroic prime, now the aged King Lua: asleep, insensible, impotent, yet unconscious to the impact of Gnostic reality, denying its existence, belittling and blaspheming its memory, subscribing exclusively to the insubstance of his own fleeting, material dreams. Only Druidic theosophy rectifies the poet's predicament: reconciling his socialized agnosis with the visionary birthright for which he yearns. Ostensible only to the Old Gnostic mind, authored with the precision of Yeats' esoteric genius, The Secret Rose grounds its detailed, delicate and complex thematic unity in the mythological and symbolically congruent system of ancient Druidic theosophy. Yeats as the artistic agent invokes the dark, mystical antiquity of a Celtic age to reconcile the corrosive light of modern orthodoxy, support Romantic ideology, resurrect national pride, and enlighten Ireland's creative patriots. For Druidry like the darkness places no ocular boundaries before the poetic vision, but expands it endlessly to converge upon eternity itself: the Gnosis every person, poet, or critic can discern should he simply know where to look.

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